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SAMUEL BUTLER: A CHARACTER IN CONFLICT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
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## ABSTRACT

The distinctive mark of the character of Samuel Butler was rebelliousness. In his works one finds a rejection of many of the beliefs, standards, and values of his contemporaries. In art, music, and literature he scorned the evaluations of the Victorian critics. The institutions of the family, the Church, and the university became the targets of his satire. He disputed many of the currently accepted findings of scholarly research, and made his own extensive studies of the Greek Testament, Shakespeare's sonnets, and the Odyssey. Even in science he refused to be completely swept away by the wave set in motion by Origin of Species and repudiated the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin.

Ever since The Way of All Flesh appeared shortly after Butler's death it has been apparent that Butler's revolt had deeply personal roots. Henry Festing Jones's vast Memoir offered a wealth of biographical material that demonstrated the close relationship between Butler's character and his work. In the 1930's appeared two further extensive studies--Clara Stillman's sympathetic and comprehensive biography and the perniciously hostile work of Malcolm Muggeridge--which made penetrating analyses of Butler's work and the forces that had shaped him. So



closely is Butler's personality integrated with almost everything he wrote that studies of his life add immeasurably to one's understanding and appreciation of his books.

The object of this thesis has been to re-examine all available Butler material, together with the principal biographical studies, in an attempt to throw new light upon the man and his works. From the re-examination it has become evident that biographers have perhaps leaned too heavily on The Way of All Flesh for their pictures of both Canon Butler and the young Samuel: the memoir of Dr. Samuel Butler, the grandfather, presents strong evidence that Butler's portrait of his father as a young man is almost wholly false; and Butler's letters of 1859 indicate that unlike his counterpart Ernest he undertook his own serious investigation of the Christian evidences after, not before, his rejection of ordination. An examination of letters and works relating to Butler's controversy with Charles Darwin reveals that the animus felt by Butler was of much earlier origin than has commonly been supposed, and that Darwin's refusal to answer Butler's charges had such a strong effect upon Butler that it colored many of his later works. And an analysis of evidence gathered from letters, note-books, personal essays, and Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered provides considerable support for a new



interpretation of Butler's most important friendships: where Charles Paine Pauli, the prototype of Towneley in The Way of All Flesh, has been generally regarded as a regrettable influence in Butler's life it would now seem likely that here as elsewhere--in his friendships with Eliza Savage, Henry Festing Jones, and Hans Faesch--Butler's own shortcomings played a considerable part in his failure ever to achieve a fully satisfying relationship with another human being, and even to deal believably in any of his works with such a relationship.



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E. G. Pope



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## CHAPTER ONE

### The Sources of Conflict in Butler's Early Background

"It is not the church in a village that is the source of the mischief, but the rectory."<sup>1</sup>

On December 4th, 1835, the usual peace and quiet of the village rectory at Langar was broken by the first cry of a rebel. That the cry was a weak utterance there can be little doubt, so thoroughly has its maker documented the fact that he was a pale, sickly, puny child, starved for all the right nurture that goes into the making of a truly Nice Person,<sup>2</sup> but however feeble it may have been it was the first public declaration of a quarrel that the son had begun with his father some nine months earlier,<sup>3</sup> and it was the first expression of a voice that was to continue, even after death, to protest against all sham in many of the institutions, conventions, beliefs, and theories that were woven into the fabric of Victorian England.

One can almost feel a little pity for the unsuspecting parent, the Reverend Thomas Butler, so snug and carefree in the cocoon of Langar; his domestic comfort looked after by

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 334.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 139, cf., Jones, Samuel Butler: A Memoir, I, 110.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, Further Extracts from the Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 38. Hereafter in the thesis this book will be referred to as Further Extracts.



cook, maidservant, and manservant; his insulation from the minor irritations of daily living ensured by the devotion of a wife whose every thought hinged upon what was best for her dear husband; and his spiritual well-being secure in the peace of a religion to whose service his life had been dedicated. How could he suspect that this small infant, this weak little specimen, was possessed of a spirit that would refuse to be trimmed, pressed into a suitable state of aridity, put in its proper place, and, in time, duly ticketed with the most likely classification? Charles Darwin, his old school friend who had first led him to the delights of botanizing, was later to have as little success in putting this irrepressible gadfly in his place. Indeed, so far, Fortune had been generous to Thomas Butler: at the age of twenty-eight he had financial security, an assured social position, a reputation for scholarship, a devoted young wife, a small daughter, and now a son; no, he had no reason to regard the new baby with suspicion.

The child must be named Samuel after his famous grandfather, headmaster of Shrewsbury, the famous public school in the west of England which was sometimes called the Welsh Eton. The baptism, however, was unavoidably delayed. In 1835 there was no railway connection with Shrewsbury, and even in summer the journey was a long and tedious one by stagecoach. When the weather and the roads improved, Dr.



Butler was involved, first, with the duties and ceremonies in connection with his retirement from his school, and subsequently with the affairs of Church and State following his appointment to the See of Lichfield and Coventry; and it was not until the autumn of 1836 that the Bishop was free to come to Langar for the christening of his grandson. Henry Festing Jones takes great delight in recording Butler's opinion that the postponement was a very risky business, because during all these months the devil had the run of him.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, a supernatural agent is almost necessary to explain the production of a rebel from such an unlikely background.

In the novel, The Way of All Flesh, one of the most convincing characters is George Pontifex, based on Bishop Butler, but in later years, after editing the Bishop's correspondence, Samuel Butler realized that he had greatly misjudged his grandfather, and he fully intended rewriting the early chapters of the book to correct the false picture.<sup>2</sup> Had he made the revision, one wonders to what extent he would have been forced to modify the portrait of Theobald. Biographers have so thoroughly amalgamated the life of Canon Butler with Butler's picture of Theobald that it is

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Samuel Butler: A Memoir, I, 18. Hereafter in the thesis this book will be referred to as Jones, Memoir.

<sup>2</sup>Jones, Memoir, II, 73.



difficult to extract the elements that are fictional.<sup>1</sup> I believe that Henry Festing Jones is responsible for the amalgam, for, in the mine of information that is the Memoir, he states:

...certainly the childhood of Ernest Pontifex in The Way of All Flesh is drawn as faithfully as he could draw it from his own; Theobald and Christina being portraits of his own father and mother as accurate as he could make them, with no softening and no exaggeration.<sup>2</sup>

In her sympathetic biography Clara G. Stillman presents Thomas Butler in Theobald's image as the servile son who, to please a domineering parent, sacrificed his own wish to become a sailor; as the dull clergyman who generously gave material comfort to the dying, but spiritual comfort not at all; and as the red-handed tyrant, who, with stupidity and brutality, set himself to the task of breaking his child's will.<sup>3</sup>

In The Way of All Flesh Butler makes the picture of Theobald as a parent credible by describing the frustrations he suffered as a bullied son, for when Theobald, on having religious doubts about his call to the ministry, balks at ordination, his father immediately sharpens his son's

<sup>1</sup>See Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 10; Henderson, Samuel Butler, 5; and Stillman, Samuel Butler, 16.

<sup>2</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 19.

<sup>3</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler: A Mid-Victorian Modern, 16-20. Hereafter in the thesis this book will be referred to as Stillman, Samuel Butler.



spiritual sensitivity by threatening to withdraw his financial support; and again when Theobald finds himself engaged to Christina the rattling of George Pontifex's will is sufficient cause to delay his marriage for several years, although in the latter instance Butler, who much as he hated his father hated matrimony more, cannot refrain from assuring us that Theobald would have been perfectly content had the engagement lasted forever. Theobald Pontifex, the son of a tyrannical and domineering father, becomes the bullying parent of Ernest.

However, no matter how accurate Butler may have been in delineating the character of his father "without exaggeration," the life of the young Theobald in The Way of All Flesh is not the life of young Tom Butler. When Butler edited the correspondence of his grandfather he found not the choleric, unfeeling, will-rattling, smug hypocrite George Pontifex, but a man he could admire for "his straightforwardness, robustness, generous placability, kindness of heart, laboriousness, and a hundred other good qualities..."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Butler, although ambitious, was neither tyrannical nor domineering, and the glimpses that can be caught of young Tom in family letters, reproduced by Samuel Butler in the memoir of his grandfather, reveal a most fortunate and dearly adored only son. If Butler's conscience smote him about the

<sup>1</sup> Butler in a letter to Canon Evans, March 21, 1889, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 73.



libel he had placed upon his grandfather's memory, he must have also felt <sup>a</sup> slight twinge of guilt for having presented a wholly false picture of his father's young manhood.

Butler has not given us in The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler many letters that refer to his father, but those that do leave no doubt that Thomas Butler was very much beloved by his parents and sisters. In 1819 we find Dr. Butler writing to Robert Darwin upon a painful subject, the complaint that Erasmus Darwin has lodged about the state of his brother Charles's bed. Interesting as the domestic arrangements at Shrewsbury are, however, it is the opening sentence that catches the modern reader's eye: "I shall have great pleasure in sending my little boy to you on Sunday."<sup>1</sup> That the busy head master of a great school can refer to thirteen-year-old Tom in such a manner indicates a tender fondness. When Tom went up to Cambridge letters show that he continued to be a favored son. To be sure, he, like Sam, had to send home his examination answers from Cambridge for critical analysis, but his father tempers the severity of his evaluation with a note of encouragement:

...you must recollect that others were liable to make faults as well as you. I hear that you have done yourself credit, and from what I see I am convinced of it.... God bless you.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, I, 164.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Butler to Tom, quoted in Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, I, 298.



In a long postscript to the above letter, Tom's sister, Mary, urges him to forget his disappointment over the examination as "Papa" is quite satisfied; and in her expression of the family's concern she throws a new light on the matron who so terrified Ernest in The Way of All Flesh with her thunder-clap description of his hero as the "rampingest-scampingest-rackety-tackety-two-row-roaringest boy in the whole school."<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Bromfield is Tom's old nurse, she to whom in The Way of All Flesh Theobald said, "You shan't go away--I'll keep you on purpose to torment you."<sup>2</sup> According to Mary's letter, the old matron is still being tormented, but this time by a dream in which Tom appeared to her with two injured fingers and wearing a hat which was peculiarly notched all around the brim. The Doctor reassured her by saying that the odd hat probably signified a wreath of laurel on Tom's triumphant head, but he himself went off to play a game of patience to determine what the fates held in store for his son.

The cards came out badly, but not the son. At the time when Mary and her father were writing words of consolation to Tom for not having done as well as he wished, Dr. Butler's friends at Cambridge were engaged in writing jubilant letters of congratulation, as a Shrewsbury boy had won the coveted Bell award, and only Tom's superior financial position had

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 124.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 10.



prevented him from receiving the second scholarship. Great were the rejoicings at Shrewsbury. Again Mary wrote to "My Dearest Boy" to tell him of the huzzas of the schoolboys, and of the delight of "Papa," Harriet and Archdeacon Lloyd, and Mrs. Bromfield.

In the novel, Theobald was robbed of his mother early: not so Tom Butler. Mrs. Butler helped the Doctor build up the school from one boarder to one hundred fifty, and it was her skill and industry in looking after all three "houses" that enabled her husband to tuck away four thousand pounds a year, even after expending many thousands upon the improvement of the buildings, establishing marriage settlements for his three children, buying an estate for his eldest grandson, and building up a library of rare books and a collection of Greek and Roman antiquities that later fetched over £10,000 at Christies'. This remarkable woman, too, comes to life in Mary's letter of congratulation:

Mama says every minute she wants to see you. If she eats an egg, It is "in honour of Tom." If she takes wine, it is to drink your health, and almost whenever she opens her mouth it is to talk of you.<sup>1</sup>

The glimpses of the adored son continue. In 1827 we find Dr. Butler writing to Tom to clear up a point of Greek grammar as apparently some don had spoken slightly of an error in the Doctor's Aeschylus. The letter begins, "That

<sup>1</sup>Mary Butler to Tom, quoted in Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, I, 302.



you may not be so ignorant a beast as your father I beg to inform you..." and briskly concludes, "Now I presume you know as much about forte and fortisan as the Greek Professor, and perhaps a little more."<sup>1</sup> In the summer Dr. Butler took his son to the continent to introduce him to his friends, and in July we hear of B. H. Kennedy, Cambridge's greatest prizeman and the Dr. Skinner of The Way of All Flesh, eagerly offering to fill in temporarily as assistant master at Shrewsbury for a year in order that the post may be held open for Tom Butler.

If the above incidents do not prove that Tom was a very rosy apple in the Doctor's eye and that his son's happiness was very near his heart, surely Mary's letter to Tom describing the celebrations held at Shrewsbury to honor his coming of age must remove any remaining doubt. Bells rang all day, the band played, the boys cheered themselves hoarse, and the cannon roared; flags flew, fireworks soared, and squibs exploded; in the houses the boys were treated to roast-beef, plum-pudding, wine, and dessert; on the Doctor's farms Tom's health was drunk in extra rations of ale, and the farm women received new gowns; and at a banquet at the Raven the family, masters, friends, and tradespeople drank toasts and made speeches.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mary Butler to Tom, quoted in Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, I, 325.

<sup>2</sup>Mary Butler to Tom, 1827, quoted in Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, I, 337.



In his novel Samuel Butler says of Fortune, "Her blindness is the merest fable; she can espy her favorites long before they are born."<sup>1</sup> In Tom Butler's case the statement seems hardly to be an exaggeration. He graduated with distinction in 1829 and was ordained deacon. In the following year he was ordained priest. He became assistant master at Shrewsbury and also served his brother-in-law as curate. At the age of twenty-five he married the daughter of a Bristol sugar refiner, Fanny Worsley who was twenty-three. After three years at Shrewsbury he was offered the comfortable living of Langar with its handsome, many-windowed Georgian house.

It may be thought that too much space has been given to the fortunate young manhood of Thomas Butler, but that period in Thomas Butler's life is significant as the contrast between his father's youth and his own must have added immeasurably to Samuel Butler's bitterness. His father had attended Shrewsbury as the clever and, judging from Mary Butler's letters, popular son of the head master. That Samuel Butler, puny, timid, conceited, and, with no red-handed father to ensure his application to his studies, indolent, was unhappy at the same school is not surprising, for he gained little sympathy or understanding from Dr. Kennedy who must have been dismayed by the unprepossessing

<sup>1</sup> Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 17.



grandson of the dynamic Dr. Butler. While at college Tom had the encouragement, pride, and love of his family to give him support. Samuel Butler had none of these. Disapproval of his friends, impatience with his time-consuming love of art and music, and depreciation of his abilities were what Samuel Butler was most likely to receive in a letter from his father. Finally, Dr. Butler, much more co-operative than his son proved to be, had done the one thing that a relative can do for another--he had died and had made Thomas Butler a comparatively wealthy man at the age of thirty-three. The cup into which Butler poured his bitterness is, of course, his autobiographical novel, The Way of All Flesh, but Dr. Butler, he discovered in 1887, in no way resembled George Pontifex and, although Butler never made the admission, it is equally evident from The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler that young Thomas Butler was not the model from which young Theobald was drawn.

When Butler's friend and critic, Miss Savage, read the first few chapters of his novel, she shrewdly observed, "Of course one of the grandsons is to resemble old Pontifex--it is very clever of you to suggest the hero's character by minutely describing the grandfather's; it will save the ticketing and labelling that novelists are given to, and which bore one so dreadfully..."<sup>1</sup> That Miss Savage was able

<sup>1</sup>Miss Savage to Samuel Butler, 1873, quoted in Letters between Samuel Butler and Miss Savage, 65. Hereafter in the thesis this book will be referred to as Letters.



to arrive at such a conclusion from reading the first fifteen pages of the manuscript in which the grandchildren have been scarcely more than named, and the hero, Ernest, not yet mentioned, implies that either Miss Savage possessed second-sight or that Samuel Butler was quick to adopt her suggestion. When Butler began The Way of All Flesh in 1873 he had not yet developed the theories of evolution that appear in Life and Habit, and, therefore, I believe that Ernest's resemblance to old John Pontifex is in some measure due to Miss Savage's comment, and that Butler extended the idea by implanting in young Theobald the fears and frustrations of his son:

He was by nature secretive, and had been repressed too much and too early to be capable of railing or blowing off steam where his father was concerned. His sense of wrong was still inarticulate, felt as a dull, dead weight ever present day by day, and if he woke at night-time still continually present, but he hardly knew what it was.<sup>1</sup>

Can young Theobald possibly be that young man of extreme good fortune, Tom Butler, or is he young Samuel--lazy and given to lying; fearing his father and disliking his sisters; accepting every syllable in the Bible as literal truth; dreaming that a future in the Army or on the land may save him from ordination; and though seeking the admiration and flattery of women really disliking them and dreading that one of the creatures might actually marry him?

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 48.



The reader of The Way of All Flesh cannot help feeling sympathy for young Theobald up until the day of his marriage, but from that point on he ceases to resemble Samuel Butler and becomes a ridiculous, dull, smug, penny-pinching, red-handed tyrant. Butler himself is not unaware of the sudden adjustment that he is forcing upon the reader, and he makes an apology:

Strange that one whom I have described hitherto as so timid and easily put upon should prove such a Tartar all of a sudden on the day of his marriage. Perhaps I have passed over his years of courtship too rapidly. During these he had become a tutor of his college, and had at last been Junior Dean. I never yet knew a man whose sense of his own importance did not become adequately developed after he had held a resident fellowship for five or six years.<sup>1</sup>

Many writers have questioned the authenticity of Butler's portrait of his father. Mrs. Garnett flew to the defence of Canon Butler in her book Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, although she admitted that he had made "a most ungenerous, a tyrannical use of the purse."<sup>2</sup> Ungenerous is perhaps too mild a term, for there are hints in the family letters that the picture of Theobald cancelling Christina's debts on the occasion of their silver wedding anniversary is not overdrawn. Thomas Butler seems to have shared his son's respect for money and exhibited a much greater restraint

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 58.

<sup>2</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 188.



in spending it. There is a hint in one of Mary's letters that Tom Butler did not care to be burdened with even trivial expenditures, for in writing to ask him to procure two Cambridge calendars, one of which is to be for himself, she is careful to mention that the cost is, of course, to be charged to Dr. Butler. Marriage apparently made the Reverend Thomas Butler keep an even tighter hold upon his purse strings. When Bishop Butler knew that he was about to die, he wanted to see his grandchildren, but, in writing of his wishes to Langar, he was careful to stimulate his son into making the necessary arrangements by adding a little fillip of persuasion: "I will take care that their journey will be no expense to you."<sup>1</sup> And in a letter describing his father's funeral to Fanny, Canon Butler seems to be suffering from a state of shock over the costliness of the respect that the townsfolk of Shrewsbury paid to their old head master:

Every house, shop, private house, or cottage in sight of the line of procession, i.e. up Wyle Cop, High Street, Pride Hill to St. Mary's, was shut as if it was midnight, all the way from the Column, and I believe all over the town. Business was entirely suspended... About sixty or seventy clergy, Mayor, Corporation, tradesmen etc., all in mourning, and with hatbands etc., at their own expense.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bishop Butler to Thomas Butler, quoted in Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, II, 347.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Butler to Fanny Butler, 1839, quoted in Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, II, 353. (The italics are mine.)



Although it has been shown that Butler's portrait of his father as a young man bears scant resemblance to Thomas Butler, I am convinced that his later portrait of Theobald in his role of paterfamilias of the rectory at Battersby is not greatly exaggerated, for it is executed by a skilled artist who could draw from innumerable unpleasant little sketches first recorded by an unhappy child in the gloom of Langar. Those writers who, while admitting that Canon Butler may have been a heavy-handed and bullying parent, cannot understand the bitterness of his son, simply have never had the misfortune to experience that blight that spreads its chill over a family dominated by a tyrant whose cold appraising eye examines each childish effort and finds it far short of perfection. In such a family, any fortuitous flicker of joy is effectively snuffed out by the cold, ominous weight of an atmosphere that is constantly being recharged with parental disapproval. The only relief felt is in those periods when the tyrant is called from home, as a little comment in The Way of All Flesh makes clear: "Those, as I have said, were always happy times, when Theobald was away for a whole day certain..."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for Butler's struggling spirit, the occasions when his father was absent from the rectory were extremely rare.

A note that Butler made in his journal in 1883 shows

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 171.



that the feeling of oppression remained constantly with him long after he had escaped from the direct control of Langar:

He never liked me, nor I him; from my earliest recollections I can call to mind no time when I did not fear him and dislike him... But no matter whose [fault] it is, the fact remains that for years and years I have never passed a day without thinking of him many times over as the the man who was sure to be against me, and who would see the bad side rather than the good of everything I said and did. ...There can be no real peace or contentment for me until either he or I are where the wicked cease from troubling.<sup>1</sup>

If Butler ever found any quality in his father which he could sincerely admire he does not seem to have recorded it: he made fun of his taste in literature, deriving particular enjoyment from the fact that Thomas Butler disliked Shakespeare because he found him "so very coarse;" he laughed at his ideas about painting; he sneered at the nature of the enjoyment the Canon obtained from his botanizing; he mocked his efforts to force a wild mountain fern to flourish in a hot-house; and he considered having a phonograph installed on a pulpit-like table to play recordings of his father's sermons should he ever suffer from insomnia.

It is strange that Thomas Butler who was so successful as a son should have proved to be such a failure as a parent, for that he was a failure is abundantly evident from the hatreds that tore the family. Both his sons detested him and longed for his death, and he disapproved of his sons

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 20-21.



with an intensity that suggests his own dislike bordered on hatred. The relationship between the Canon and his daughters has been made much of by Mrs. Garnett who in Samuel Butler and His Family Relations wished to modify the savagery of the impressions created by Butler's novel by showing a loving family in the rectory at Langar under the humorous and kindly eye of a benevolent, if hot-tempered, parent. However, in a note that was first made public in 1951 when Keynes and Hill brought out a new edition of Butler's Note-Books, Butler shows that at least in his old age the Canon was surrounded by tensions created by his devoted daughters: "My niece says my father hates Harrie, and at times will not speak to her."<sup>1</sup> In view of the pleasant family relationships Canon Butler experienced in his own youth, his failure to win the respect and affection of his sons is surprising. However, it is possible that the excessive admiration, love, and consideration that Thomas Butler received in his youth at Shrewsbury made him incapable of understanding the needs of his own children, and that his own successful scholarship filled him with too great an ambition that his eldest son should win even higher honors.

Samuel Butler speaks of his father's bad temper and of the Latin lessons that were begun early in 1840: in view of

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 24.



the fact that it is usually difficult to hold the attention of a four-year-old for any considerable length of time, the daily beatings, under the circumstances, seem to have been inevitable. When lessons were over there was little chance to escape from the wrath of "Papa", for he was always about the house, and should his ever-present eye chance to miss some slight fall from grace, there was "Mama" more than eager to jerk her dear boy back on to the path of righteousness. Mrs. Garnett wrote her book about the Butler family more than fifty years after the death of Fanny Butler and found no one who remembered her vividly, but she was able to report: "All who tell me of her speak of her intense devotion to her husband."<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Butler's devotion very likely aggravated her son's unhappiness indirectly as well directly, for it will be remembered that in the novel, in describing the character of Christina, Butler observes:

It would have been better perhaps if she had not so frequently assured her husband that he was the best and wisest of mankind, for no one in his little world ever dreamed of telling him anything else, and it was not long before he ceased to have any doubt upon the matter.<sup>2</sup>

And there can be little doubt that Fanny Butler's obsequiousness as a wife made her a rather unsatisfactory mother, for the stormy correspondence of 1859 makes it apparent that she

<sup>1</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 45.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 68.



was ever quick to betray whatever confidences she received from her son. In his published Note-Books Butler says surprisingly little about his mother; but what little he writes is uncomplimentary, and we know that on returning from visiting her as she lay dying in France he confessed to Miss Savage that he had long since lost all affection for his mother.

Had Mrs. Butler been very much different from Christina of The Way of All Flesh and the mother of John Pickard Owen in The Fair Haven, one would expect that surely her son must have recorded one instance of her kindness or gaiety to mitigate the horror, dread, and misery in the vignettes he has left of his earliest years at Langar in which we can see a little boy's frightened eyes looking at the rigid, naked body of his six-months-old brother; in which we can hear him and Harriet filling the rectory with their screams of terror as they wait for the coming of the end of the world; and in which we can see him on his fourth birthday smiling with shy delight over two treasures brought to him by a sewing woman who had remembered the importance of the day. On that last occasion his pleasure is short-lived, for "Papa" is standing in the doorway of the nursery: a messenger has just arrived, and Papa must leave at once for Eccleshall because Grandpapa Butler has gone to join baby William in Heaven. The black shadow disappears almost as swiftly as



it had arrived, but with it go a little pot of honey and a string of pretty birds' eggs.

Not the entire burden of the children's education fell upon Canon Butler, however, for in his mother's letter which Butler reproduces in The Way of All Flesh we learn of the virtues which Mrs. Butler had striven to instil when teaching her sons their hymns, prayers, and sums, and when sharing with them "the happy Sunday evenings." Fearing that she might die, she admonished her boys thus:

Let [your father] find you obedient, affectionate and attentive to his wishes, upright, self-denying and diligent; let him never blush for or grieve over the sins and follies of those who owe him such a debt of gratitude, and whose first duty it is to study his happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Fanny Butler scarcely needed sons: a pair of well-bred spaniels would have suited her purpose admirably. Although neither she nor her husband read the book, Erewhon is said to have killed her, as well it might, for, besides the satire on religion, which would be mortifying enough, what Butler wrote about the "World of the Unborn" was, in effect, a series of thrusts against a woman capable of writing the sentiments quoted above:

Consider the infinite risk...to be born of silly parents, and trained to unrealities! of parents who regard you as a sort of chattel or property, belonging more to them than to yourself! Again, you may draw utterly unsympathetic parents, who will never be able

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 102-103.



to understand you, and who will do their best to thwart you (as a hen when she has hatched a duckling), and then call you ungrateful because you do not love them; or, again, you may draw parents who look upon you as a thing to be cowed while it is still young, lest it should give them trouble hereafter by having wishes and feelings of its own.<sup>1</sup>

In writing of the place of women in education John Stuart Mill observes:

The education which it does belong to the mother to give, and which if not imbibed from them is seldom obtained in perfection at all, is the training of the affections, and through the affections, of the conscience and the whole moral being.<sup>2</sup>

Fanny Butler, as she fed her children "spiritually upon such brimstone and treacle as the late Bishop of Winchester's Sunday stories,"<sup>3</sup> may have early lost the affection of her eldest son, but there can be no doubt that she nevertheless left his conscience in a state of quivering sensitivitiy: it was to torment him for the rest of his life.

Happily, Butler's childhood was not wholly a series of punishments, "happy Sunday evenings," and "sofa talks," for it was fashionable for wealthy Victorians to make continental tours, and when Butler was not quite eight years of age the windows of the world were opened for one wonderful winter when the family visited Italy seeking culture and sunshine.

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Erewhon, 176.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Hayek, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, 66.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 26.



No matter how unfavorable an opinion one forms of Butler's parents from what has been written about them by their son and others, one cannot deny that they possessed both determination and courage in a remarkably high degree. Even with the modern conveniences of refrigeration, speedy laundries, and simplified travel, few parents today would embark on an extended European tour with four children ranging from two to nine years in age. As few parts of the Continent were connected by rail in 1843, the Butlers with their governess and coachman covered the greater part of their route by carriage.

One can imagine the excitement of the young Butlers suddenly decanted into the freer atmosphere of the Continent, far different from the restraining chill of Langar where any natural high spirits had been severely disciplined into a meek propriety becoming to the obedient children of a Victorian rectory. Perhaps, once removed from the censure and critical eyes of his parishioners, even Canon Butler became less like "a human Sunday." The very novelty of the journey must have brought joy to young Samuel, jogging at seven miles an hour along the roads of Belgium under a leafy canopy of oak, chestnut, and beech, rattling with amazing speed through the pine forests of Germany, and then again adventuring, drawn by horses, through the grandeur and majesty of the Swiss Alps into the wonder that was Italy.



The enchantment of foreign tongues, colorful costumes, and strange customs could not have been lost upon one as sensitive as Butler, but, surprisingly, in Alps and Sanctuaries there is record of only one childhood memory of this first visit to Italy, the memory of an event on the return journey in the springtime:

My first acquaintance with the Monte Cenere was made some seven-and-thirty years ago when I was a small boy. I remember with what delight I found wild narcissuses growing in a meadow upon the top of it, and was allowed to gather as many as I liked.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the holiday air and the relaxation of some restrictions, lessons were not entirely abandoned on the Continent, however, for, while the family were staying in Naples, Signora Capocci was engaged to teach them Italian. That the lessons were memorable, there can be no doubt, for when Butler was revising Erewhon as late as 1901 he added a remark, made by the Signora, to illustrate the Erewhonian belief that immorality was the result of either pre-natal or post-natal misfortune. "Poor unfortunate fellow! he has murdered his uncle and his aunt,"<sup>2</sup> uttered in Italian, was surely an unusual remark for a very small boy to tuck away in his memory, and the retention suggests either that young Samuel's sense of humor developed its peculiar twist extremely early, or that, possibly, in

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Alps and Sanctuaries, 228.

<sup>2</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 26. Cf. Erewhon, 94.



recalling some of his own misdemeanors he found some comfort in the second meaning of "disgrazia". Butler was always grateful for the Italian lessons he received that winter and again in 1853, for in Italy itself he met the first enduring love of his life, and to him ever afterwards Italy meant freedom, warmth, beauty, and appreciation.

The Note-Books record that the bread was sour and the butter, when available, often rank and cheesy, and that disappointed beggars would run after the carriage yelling, "Eretici!"<sup>1</sup> But although these annoyances may have distressed the Canon and his wife, they evidently did not worry young Samuel unduly. He was free from the restraints of the rectory, free from the daily whippings, and free to enjoy such stirring sights as the scarlet-robed Cardinals stooping to kiss the Pope's slipper in the Sistine Chapel, a monk rolling like a sack of potatoes down a staircase, and the amazing view from the top of St. Peter's. One wonders whether it was on this first visit to Rome that the boy decided he would become an artist. Did small Samuel stand below the masterpieces of Rafael, Leonardo, and Michelangelo with his head thrown back and his mouth slightly open aping the conventional but uncritical reverence of his elders that was to be satirized by the twinkling eye of an older Butler? As short legs are usually unequal to miles of picture

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 47.



galleries, however, it is probable that on many occasions the children were left in charge of a servant, and no doubt small Samuel then experienced something of the gaiety and warm friendliness of the Italian people. Very likely there was someone who gave him good things to eat, who sang him sad songs, and who laughed at his small jokes. One cannot think of Butler's childhood joy on the continent without recalling that a similar delight was shared by two other brilliant Victorians who suffered even more than he from severe parental discipline and too rigorous an education, John Ruskin and John Stuart Mill.

On returning to Langar, Butler faced yet another two years of lessons from his father, but at the age of ten he was sent to Allesley School near Coventry. The choice of a school other than Shrewsbury for the grandsons of Dr. Butler is extremely puzzling. Allesley was almost as far as Shrewsbury from Langar, but, of course, as it was not a famous school it may have been much less expensive. However, much as economy would have appealed to Canon Butler, he may have had another reason for keeping his sons away from Shrewsbury for so long. There would seem to be a hint in The Way of All Flesh that the reason may have been that Canon Butler distrusted the kindness of his childless sister, Mary, who lived at Meole Brace near the famous school, as much as Theobald and Christina feared the influence of Alethea at Roughborough.



The character of Alethea is said to have been based on that of Miss Savage, although that extremely perspicacious lady did not seem to recognize herself and warned Butler that Ernest's aunt was too good to be true as he had made her like "that most odious of women, Mrs. John Stuart Mill-- who, though capable of surpassing Shelley preferred to efface herself for the greater comfort of Mr. John Stuart Mill!"<sup>1</sup> True, Alethea was a free thinker and uttered the Savage witticisms, but Aunt Bather, the Mary who had written such charming letters to Butler's father at Cambridge, has perhaps more claim than Miss Savage to being the prototype of Ernest's aunt. Although, unlike Alethea, she preached at him a good deal,<sup>2</sup> Butler remembers Mary Bather as a most amiable woman who was always kind to him. Her tongue could be sharp--for it was she who told him that he should never excel as he was as unstable as water--but it was Aunt Bather, rather than his mother, who was to be entrusted with the packing of a tuck hamper that would suit Tom and himself, and, it was in the house at Meole Brace that he stuffed himself with "bread and butter and honey"<sup>3</sup> to fill the hollows left by the Shrewsbury diet. And, if she did not

<sup>1</sup>Miss Savage to Samuel Butler, 1883, Letters, 310.

<sup>2</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 35.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.



leave him a fortune invested in Midland Ordinary, she encouraged his love of music by playing him the overtures to Rodelinda and Atalanta, and left him four treasured volumes of Clarke's Handel. It seems that Butler, perhaps unconsciously, was drawing from Mary Butler Bather as much as from Miss Savage when he created Ernest's aunt.

Although the Canon's sister had no opportunity to spoil his son when he was a little boy, it is likely that the house at Meole Brace was a refuge for Samuel when at the age of twelve he entered his grandfather's famous school, Shrewsbury, renowned alike for its classicism and that other less admirable quality that a satiric Butler could not resist when he named Ernest's school Roughborough. However, it was the classicism of Shrewsbury that proved to be Samuel's greatest trial. Perhaps when Samuel met his new form-master he felt grateful to his father for the first time in his life, for, <sup>t</sup>letter-perfect in the Eton texts, he could face the ordeal with equanimity. To his horror, however, he found that he had yet another deep grudge against his father. Canon Butler had not only committed the crime of beating Latin into him, but he had also beaten with the wrong book:

When I went to Shrewsbury at 12½ years old I knew the Latin and Greek Grammars perfectly; I had them at my fingers' ends and could repeat every rule without a moment's hesitation...For I began Latin when only a few months over 4 years old, and my father thrashed it into me (I mean physically) day after day for years. I have no recollection of anything else. By the time I reached Shrewsbury the lesson was thoroughly



learned; but on reaching Shrewsbury I was told that all this<sup>1</sup> was wrong and I must learn Kennedy's grammar.

Butler goes on to say that had his father been there to whip him he no doubt would have learned the new rules, but that nothing short of physical force would have produced the necessary effort. Had he not thus forgotten all the grammatical rules, he believed that he would have placed higher in the Classical Tripos at Cambridge, and, had that been so, he would in all likelihood have been awarded a fellowship.

Butler's letters from Shrewsbury are the dutiful, slightly priggish reports that would be expected at Langar, but there is the occasional flash of humor. At the age of fifteen Samuel could appreciate a joke even if he himself were the butt:

I do flatter myself that I am improving slowly in my exercises; in my theme the other day I talked of babies finding a great difficulty in walking the Dr. turned it to me and observed, "any Baby could find it easy to make such Latin as this; why can't you saaoar" (spreading his arms as if he was going to fly) "you hop from twig to twig and seem afraid to venture two steps beyond the nest."<sup>2</sup>

In another letter written to his sister Harriet when he was over seventeen and still at Shrewsbury, there is a second glimpse of Dr. Kennedy with a satirical comment which

<sup>1</sup> Butler, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Butler to his mother, 1851, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 40.



foreshadows the famous glass of water and small piece of bread and butter in The Way of All Flesh:

Dr. Lyon Playfair and a lot of swells are coming, the mayor and corporation and the d's corporation and ever so many more are going to be taught to eat upon scientific principles which by the way the Dr. is a very capable proficient in already. The Dr.<sup>1</sup> will make a fool of himself as sure as he's born.<sup>1</sup>

The same letter shows that Butler, even at seventeen, was still very much attached to the "nest" at Langar. He begins by assuring his family that he is not weeping because they are all going abroad for several months, for he agrees with "Papa" that the time from his studies simply cannot be spared, but adds that, much as he would like to go also, it is the lengthy separation from them all that he regrets most. Was he, in fact, weeping? Was the handwriting uneven and smudged? Is the remark, that immediately follows his statement of noble resignation, that he is "in an unmitigated state of cold cream" on account of the very bad place on his hand which prevents him from holding the pen properly, actually an early work of fiction? One's suspicions are aroused as the touches of humor in this particular letter seem to be a little forced, as they are balanced by a gloomy query as to what is to become of him during the Christmas holidays, a pathetic reference to the rats squealing under the wainscot, and the somewhat bitter hope that no outbreak

<sup>1</sup>Butler to his sister, 1853, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 42.



of war will detain them in Italy. A terse comment added to this letter many years later shows that an elderly Butler still resented the fact that his being left at home had even been considered: "They were all going abroad for several months. I was told that I was not to go, but in the end I was taken."<sup>1</sup>

Butler has been called a hypocrite because so often what he said seemed to depend upon the audience he was addressing. Nowhere is this tendency to run with the hounds, to use a favorite phrase of Butler's, more apparent than in what he has written about Dr. Kennedy and Shrewsbury, for, as well as the scalpel he uses on both in The Way of All Flesh, there are cutting remarks in his Note-Books and letters to be balanced against what seems to amount to eulogizing in his Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler. We must compare, "At that time I used still to echo my poor mother who called that old fool Professor Kennedy a genius. I have since found that this silence trick is common with people who would get reputation cheaply,"<sup>2</sup> with:

...I was six years at Shrewsbury under him [Dr. Kennedy], and from the bottom of my heart can say that he treated me with great forbearance--far more than I deserved. He lost nothing of what he found at Shrewsbury save only numbers; and this loss, as I have already said, was due to causes in no way connected with himself. Nevertheless I cannot think

<sup>1</sup>Butler to his sister, 1853, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 42.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Further Extracts, 212.



that he could have done at Harrow what he so brilliantly achieved at Shrewsbury.<sup>1</sup>

If any man save Butler had written this comment on Dr. Kennedy, it would pass for a friendly tribute, but a closer examination of the smooth phrases makes one wonder whether great forbearance is an especially desirable quality in a head master. Patience, yes, but not undue forbearance. Great forbearance carries more than a suggestion of indulgence which could account for a falling enrolment. Too, there is more than a hint in the words "what he found" that Kennedy's brilliant achievements at Shrewsbury were largely due to the ground-work of his predecessor, Dr. Butler. That Butler prided himself on his skill as a dissembler is evident from the comment made in a letter to Mr. Phillips at Shrewsbury shortly after the Life was published, "I do not believe that anyone would gather from my book what my real opinion of Kennedy is."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps it was what Jones calls the almost Chinese reverence for his ancestor that explains the difference in the following statements which Butler makes about the school. The first was written after he had attended the annual Shrewsbury School dinner some ten years before he had learned to appreciate his old school in the process of writing his

<sup>1</sup> Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, II, 162.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 267.



grandfather's memoir:

Why should I, knowing that I do not particularly like these people nor they me, why should I, who never liked my school nor got much good from it, go and pay a guinea for a bad dinner, and eat and drink what it takes me a whole day to recover from?<sup>1</sup>

The lack of enthusiasm for Shrewsbury that is evident in this note stands in sharp contrast to the pride with which Butler describes his association with his grandfather's old school in the Life:

If it was rough it does not seem to have been rough enough to do anybody any harm, at all events it was robust, and free from either priggishness or black-guardism. I have never felt that I should have done better anywhere else. If I were not a Shrewsbury man I would be one...

If I were asked what I flattered myself upon as being the pre-eminent virtues of Shrewsbury, I would say sincerity, downrightness, hatred of sham, love of work, and a strong sense of duty. What little of these noble qualities I dare pretend to, I owe hardly more to my parents than to the school at which they placed me.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the last sentence is apt to startle the eye of anyone who has read the indictment of the insincerity, evasiveness, and love of self-delusion in the characters of Theobald and Christina in The Way of All Flesh, but one must remember that the memoir, presumably, was to be read by ex-Salopians, by churchmen, by the head masters of the great public schools, and by the professors of Cambridge

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Further Extracts, 195.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, II, 164.



and Oxford, the two universities which had had to part with so many of their highest honors to the pupils of Dr. Butler. Even Queen Victoria was to receive a copy. One can assume that the illustrious group of readers read on in admiration, untroubled by the trembling shade of a small Salopian named Ernest, who, locked away in Butler's desk, still lingered in the World of the Unborn.

In this chapter I have traced some of the origins of conflict that developed in the character of Samuel Butler. The concept that Butler's spirit was prematurely and irremediably warped by the mistreatment and continual cold disapproval that he received from his father is, of course, not a new one, as the idea has been repeatedly set forth ever since biographical material was first gleaned from The Way of All Flesh. However, the assumption that Thomas Butler was a mean and tyrannical father because he himself had been the victim of paternal bullying and censure--an assumption that has also enjoyed wide circulation since Butler's George Pontifex was first introduced to the reading public--has here been demonstrated to be entirely erroneous. Furthermore, I have traced this misconception to the false picture given in The Way of All Flesh of young Theobald whom Butler actually endowed with his own fears and frustrations<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In Samuel Butler and his Family Relations, Mrs. Garnett shares my view that there was much of Samuel Butler in the character of young Theobald, for she observes: "It seems indisputable to me that in the story of Theobald's youth also, there is a good deal of Butler's own experience, and that this weak, shy and sullen young man very fairly represents the weakness that Butler had to overcome in himself before he attained possession of his birthright. (180).



rather than with the thriving self-esteem and the carefully cultivated, vigorous self-confidence enjoyed by young Thomas Butler. I have shown that Canon Butler's severity was rooted not in any unpleasantness in his own boyhood, but in the unhealthy egotism that had developed in an environment from which he had derived more adulation than his head apparently could comfortably accommodate; and that the resultant swelling caused him to be overly ambitious for his eldest son, whose numerous shortcomings aggravated both the irritability and meanness of Thomas Butler. Moreover, I have suggested that Butler's resentment was intensified by the realization that his father had enjoyed what his own spirit most craved and was denied: love and appreciation.

The conflict in Butler's spirit led to a puzzling dualism in his character that at times manifests itself in what appears to be hypocrisy, a quality that he himself frequently attacked. In his intellectual powers he was the hare coursing far ahead of the hounds, scorning them for their mediocrity, conventionality, and stupidity, yet in his own life capable of making a complete about-face and trying to appear as a discreet member of the pack--a conventional, gentlemanly greyhound. As Cole has observed:

A man who revolts against the values of his time and place does not cease to belong to his time and place; and...Butler, in revolt against so many of the mid-Victorian values, remained eminently a Victorian himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cole, Samuel Butler, 21.



The Way of All Flesh, the Note-Books, and his private papers and letters would be read by people of another century, and if these readers came to the conclusion that Samuel Butler was not always a gentleman, it would be of little consequence as long as the frankness of these writings ensured his remaining on the "lips of living men." The training he had received at Langar and Shrewsbury, however, had fashioned him to fit a certain mould, and, as much as his spirit rebelled, there was no escape.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Emerging Spirit of the Satirist

...In mind as in body, like most of those who in the end come to think for themselves, he was a slow grower. By far the greater part, moreover, of his education had been an attempt, not so much to keep him in blinkers as to gouge his eyes out altogether.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his writing career Samuel Butler had much to say about priggishness, and yet he often championed conceit. He believed that "all success is built from a scaffolding of conceit,"<sup>2</sup> and that faith is born of experience and conceit.<sup>3</sup> In his own character there was a constant conflict between humility and vanity, although his detractors would claim that the struggle was an unequal one as conceit was by far the stronger combatant. Butler twice refers to his youthful self-esteem, once indirectly, once explicitly. In The Way of All Flesh Alethea observes that even at an early age Ernest believed in Ernest with a belief which was amusing from its absurdity;<sup>4</sup> and in a letter to his sister, Mrs. Bridges, Butler confirms that this particular trait was no mere fictional embroidery, but had an authentic basis, when he comments on a visit to

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 261.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Further Extracts, 167.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 148.

<sup>4</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 133.



Aunt Sarah Worsley in 1886: "... she took occasion to impart to me her reminiscences of my childhood of which, it seems, my conceit had been the feature that made the deepest impression upon her."<sup>1</sup>

Butler's self-esteem must have been a hardy plant to have survived both the constant belittling that he received from his father and his failure at school, though crammed with Latin and Greek, to make any impression on Dr. Kennedy. But in 1854 when Butler moved from the blighting atmosphere of Langar and Shrewsbury into an environment where his sense of intellectual, social, and even athletic superiority received immediate nurture. As early as November of that year he was able to report to his father that he had succeeded in winning one of the five scholarships awarded to freshmen at Cambridge. This early scholastic success must have done much to mitigate the deep feelings of inferiority and worthlessness that both his early studies under his father and his undistinguished career at Shrewsbury had succeeded in implanting. As he promptly settled down to the life of an industrious student he gained a high standing in the May examinations which resulted in his receiving the honor of giving a Latin oration in the college chapel in his second year. Of his university training Butler writes,

<sup>1</sup>Butler in a letter to his sister, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 36.



"It encouraged my natural conceit ... and did me harm in a hundred ways in which there can be no object in detailing."<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Ernest of The Way of All Flesh, like his prototype, also surprised everyone by winning a scholarship, although he, too, had arrived at Cambridge with his former faith in himself eradicated by his years at a public school: "Of ambition he had at that time not one particle; greatness, or indeed superiority of any kind, seemed so far off and incomprehensible to him that the idea of connecting it with himself never crossed his mind."<sup>2</sup>

Jones declares that "Ernest's Cambridge life is taken from Butler's own life,"<sup>3</sup> and therefore we may believe that "Cambridge was the first place where he had ever been consciously and continually happy."<sup>4</sup> College life suited Butler admirably. Because he had some trouble with his eyesight, it was his custom to rise shortly after five in order to read for six hours in the morning light, and, although he was obliged to study with his tutor for another hour in the evening, this arrangement left his afternoons free for music and the river. Although he later regretted the time he had spent on a composer so inferior to Handel,

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 44.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 192.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 51.

<sup>4</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 190.



Butler learned to like Beethoven because the Beethoven cult was strong at Cambridge. He also acquired the necessary graces to become one of the socially élite as a member of the Lady Margaret boat club, an achievement which never could have been regretted by one so dedicated as Butler to the worship of the superior gentleman.

It would be pleasant to think that Butler's joy as coxswain of the Lady Margaret boat stemmed wholly from the realization that, for the first time in his life, he was contributing his skill to a team engaged in a highly competitive sport, but, judging from a letter written to his mother, one gathers that Butler's pride sprang as much from the social prestige of the crew as from its athletic achievement:

L-- is good enough himself, he is only gawky and uncouth; but he is never a man that I could ever become in any way intimate with; and so, I suppose, considering me a "bloated aristocrat," in company with all the rest of the Lady Margaret boat club, he has determined to have none of us, in which case his spirit is to be admired tho' his judgement and appreciation are very reprehensible.<sup>1</sup>

If we are to believe that in writing of Ernest's Cambridge career Butler was writing about himself, we must conclude that in this letter he was trying only to impress his mother with his social superiority, and that he himself felt a closer affinity with the unfortunate L--, for it will be

<sup>1</sup>Butler to his mother, 1857, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 53.



remembered that Ernest, in spite of some awkwardness and want of savoir faire, "soon became a not unpopular member of the best set of his year, and though neither capable of becoming, nor aspiring to become, a leader, was admitted by the leaders as among their nearer hangers-on."<sup>1</sup> The term "hanger-on" forcibly suggests that he felt his position to be insecure and that the group tolerated his presence within their charmed circle merely because they lacked a more suitable candidate. Although it might be argued that it was a maturer Butler looking back who saw his social position at college with a clearer eye and realized that he had been closer to L-- than to the "bloated aristocrats," the young Butler was not lacking in perception, for, although he may have wished his mother to believe that he was one of the socially superior beings, his college satires suggest that he himself was quite aware that he did not really belong to the "best set," but was, in fact, a "hanger-on."

The realization that as great a gulf lay between him and the wealthy or aristocratic young men as between himself and the Simeonites, filled him with rage, and the conflict between wishing to belong to the elect and despising himself for his weakness, tore at his inner being. All his life the conflict harrassed him and influenced his thinking: he lashed out at priggishness, snobbery, and sham, but at the

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 192.



same time he justified his secret longing by building up a philosophy around the truly fortunate, the Towneleys of the world, they who were rich, strong, handsome, successful, and gracious, they who always intuitively knew the right thing to say or do. It is hard to believe, but according to Butler's own testimony in a very ungracious note about his mother, he had already become imbued with class consciousness and was, indeed, a worshipper of the ideal of the gentleman at the age of eight.<sup>1</sup> Although class consciousness was a significant characteristic of the Victorian era, it seems strange that so resolute and independent a thinker as Butler should have been so strongly impressed by social prestige. However, Butler was convinced that a man could not escape from his past selves, and we know that Jones sometimes called him back to earth from his flights of fancy by addressing him as "Christina." Although Christina of the novel could only dream of a lordship in the family, Fanny Butler may have told her children that their grandfather lived in a castle and was addressed as "My Lord." And, although Butler claimed that he knew very little about his grandfather until he came into possession of the Bishop's correspondence, it is extremely probable, that, if Mrs. Butler's character resembled that of Christina, she would have impressed upon her children that their

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A.



grandfather had been on friendly terms with many of the great men of England. In view of his background, it is not surprising that Butler should have indulged in social aspirations.

One has every reason to believe that the youthful Butler found his small intellectual, social, and even athletic successes extremely gratifying, for he branched out from his own especial interests of music and art and began writing essays, poems, parodies, and satires. In the satires there lies a fairly definite indication that something happened to Butler during his Cambridge years that would explain both the later dualism of his social attitude and the intensity of his later friendships. It would seem that Butler thought that he had become the close friend of one of the wealthy or aristocratic youths and then was subsequently snubbed. Such a betrayal would explain his idealizing of gentleman, his worship of the "Swell," and his hatred of cliques or groups of artists, writers, musicians, critics, and scientists who had won public acclaim. In all his later friendships Butler carried devotion to exaggerated lengths, and in the few cases in which he believed he might have failed a friend he felt guilty pangs of remorse which, in at least one instance, were puzzling to even such a close comrade as Jones.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 170.



There is no record in the Memoir of Butler's having been dropped by any of his Cambridge friends, but as all Butler's books were personal there is no reason to believe that his first satires were exceptions. Mrs. Stillman in her biography comments, "Like many another writer, he evolved his perceptions of general truths out of the crises of his own life . . .,"<sup>1</sup> and she quotes Harris in support of her point: "His work carries with it pre-eminently the sense of having lived the things he wrote."<sup>2</sup>

It seems evident enough that the satires which Butler wrote at Cambridge were motivated by personal bitterness, for the irony thrusts home with stabbing force. He was using his pen as a weapon, as he did throughout his life, to exorcise the devils that raged within him. In his "Prospectus of the Great Split Society" he wrote:

...It is also strictly forbidden by this society's laws to form a firm friendship grounded upon esteem and a perception of great and good qualities in the object of one's liking, for this kind of friendship lasts a long time--nay, for life; but each member must have a furious and passionate running after his friend for the time being, insomuch that he could never part an instant from him.... The stroking of the hair and affectionate embracings are much recommended, for they are so manly.<sup>3</sup>

Revealing as the above excerpt is, it is in the essay on "Powers" that Butler's sense of personal injury becomes

<sup>1</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, 96.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, Samuel Butler, 1916, quoted in Stillman, Samuel Butler, 97.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, A First Year in Canterbury Settlement and Other Early Essays, 33. Hereafter in the thesis this title will be shortened to A First Year.



abundantly clear, for only Butler's own painful experience could account for the sharpness of his delineation of a snobbish friend:

...If thou hast a cousin or schoolfellow who is somewhat rustic or uncouth in his manner but nevertheless hath an excellent heart, know him in private and in thine individual capacity, but when thou art abroad or in the company of other powers shun him as if he were a venomous thing and deadly. Again, if thou sittest at table with a man at the house of a friend and laughest and talkest with him and playest pleasant, if he be not perfect in respect of externals see thou pass him the next day without a smile, even though he may have prepared his countenance for a thousand grins; but if in the house of the same friend or another thou shouldst happen to stumble upon him, deal with him as though thy previous conversation had broken off but five minutes previously; but should he be proud and have nothing at all to say unto thee, forthwith caluminate him to thine acquaintance as a sorry-spirited fellow and mean.<sup>1</sup>

The satire may have caused the L-- of the letter quoted earlier to smile somewhat wryly, for he could hardly have failed to observe that Samuel Butler was speaking of treatment he himself had received as well as given. Ernest's idol, it will be remembered, was a true gentleman, for, although the scratch fours were ended, "Towneley never passed Ernest thenceforward without a nod and a few good-natured words."<sup>2</sup> All his life Butler sought the nod and the good-natured words from the élite, and when these were not forthcoming he immediately withdrew into his shell and then,

<sup>1</sup>Butler, A First Year, 37.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 210.



when he got home, obtained some comfort by finding revenge in his ink-bottle.

Butler's first Cambridge essay to appear in print is, however, not satirical. In the first issue of The Eagle, a magazine written and edited by members of St. John's College, there appeared "On English Composition and Other Matters" which is surprising for its lucid expression of the tenets which Butler reiterated in his Note-Books and upheld for the remainder of his writing career. Many of the ideas expressed in the essay appear to form the very spring-boards from which he hurled himself into the waters of scientific, religious, and literary criticism. The germ of his quarrel with Darwin in Evolution Old and New lies in this precept:

There is no shame in being obliged to others for opinions, the shame is not being honest enough to acknowledge it: I would have no one omit to put down a useful thought because it was not his own, provided it tended to the better expression of his matter, and he did not conceal its source; let him, however, set out the borrowed capital to interest.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in his shrewd observation,

We are all too apt when we sit down to study a subject to have already formed our opinion, and to weave all matter to the warp of our preconceived judgment, to fall in with the received idea, and, with biassed minds, unconsciously to follow in the wake of public opinion, while professing to lead it,<sup>2</sup>

we can see that he is already sharpening his quill for his

<sup>1</sup>Butler, A First Year, 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5-6.



later attacks upon such famous savants as Dean Alford <sup>1</sup> and Sir Sydney Lee.<sup>2</sup> Although Butler himself may be guilty of having fallen into the error of weaving all matter to the warp of his own preconceived judgment, no one can lay against him the charge of agreeing with the popular point of view, for whatever subject interested him he was sure to examine it from every angle but the accepted one. In his essay, too, young Butler, unlike his hero Ernest, had already committed himself to a belief which was to mark his attitude towards all his works but one: this was that he should never hunt for a subject. All his books, he was later to say, came to him clamoring to be written, and to the prodding of impatient Miss Savage who wanted a novel he answered, "I do not want to write anything in particular, and I shall paint until an idea strikes me which I must work out or die, like The Fair Haven. I shall do nothing well unless con amore and under diabolical inspiration."<sup>3</sup>

The essay shows also that when only twenty-two Butler had already made up his mind on the subject of literary style, for he wrote:

Most readers will have anticipated me in admitting that a man should be clear of his meaning before he

<sup>1</sup>See Butler, The Fair Haven, 161-169.

<sup>2</sup>See Butler, Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, 52-62.

<sup>3</sup>Butler to Miss Savage, 1873, Letters, 38.



endeavours to give to it any kind of utterance, and that having made up his mind what to say, the less thought he takes how to say it, more than briefly, pointedly, and plainly, the better...<sup>1</sup>

His Note-Books show that in 1897 his youthful opinion had been in no way modified:

A man may, and ought to take a great deal of pains to write clearly, tersely and euphoniously: he will write many a sentence three or four times over--to do much more than this is worse than not rewriting at all: he will be at great pains to see that he does not repeat himself, to arrange his matter in the way that shall best enable the reader to master it, to cut out superfluous words and, even more, to eschew irrelevant matter; but in each case he will be thinking not of his own style but of his reader's convenience.<sup>2</sup>

Butler's essay is remarkable not only for its vigorous championship of many of the ideas that were to become the battle flags of the mature Butler, but also for its evidence that he realized genius is guided by "intuitive perception." Commenting upon Butler's recognition of the importance of the unconscious forty years before Freud, Mrs. Stillman points out that, "Intuition rather than technical excellence, the instinctive rather than the acquired, was what he valued increasingly in life and art..."<sup>3</sup>

In view of these early beliefs about style and genius it might be profitable at this point to examine what evidence there is of Butler's taste in literature. In later life he

<sup>1</sup> Butler, A First Year, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 187.

<sup>3</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, 39.



regarded his admiration for Thackeray and Tennyson as a piece of youthful folly; but although an overindulgence in The Idylls of the King or the nauseating versifying perpetrated by his father and sister within the family circle may partly explain why his avoidance of poetry was so extreme that he claimed that his acquaintanceship with the work of Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Browning was limited to those excerpts which were quoted in Royal Academy catalogues, his utter contempt for so many famous authors is more difficult to understand. The style of Bunyan and Swift met with his commendation, but that of Walter Pater reminded him of an old woman who had had her face enamelled, and that of Matthew Arnold of the faint sickly odor of hawthorn.<sup>1</sup> He found Dickens "vulgar,"<sup>2</sup> Ibsen "boring,"<sup>3</sup> Lamb, although he had said some very good things, "forced, faint, full of false sentiment and prolix,"<sup>4</sup> Bishop Butler (of The Analogy) a "poor creature,"<sup>5</sup> Morley "unreadable,"<sup>6</sup> Plato, although preferable to Carlyle, "one

<sup>1</sup> Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 184.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Further Extracts, 79.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Butler to Miss Savage, 1876, Letters, 136.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, Further Extracts, 209.



of the Seven Humbugs of Christendom,"<sup>1</sup> and Emery Walker's comparison of Meredith with himself deplorable.<sup>2</sup> Middlemarch, he thought "singularly unattractive;"<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Meister, disgusting and depressing;<sup>4</sup> John Inglesant, displeasing;<sup>5</sup> Ivanhoe, "awful;"<sup>6</sup> while Joseph Andrews, he confessed, put him out of all patience.<sup>7</sup> One is puzzled to know whether the fierce condemnations of literary people that lie scattered throughout his letters and Note-Books were really genuine or were rather akin to Butler's boast that he had the smallest library of any literary man in London, and part of a legend that he wished to create about himself, the legend of a man too busily engaged in scholarly research at the British Museum to give much consideration to anything but the very best literature.

In any case, however, Butler's sweeping denunciations of the literary achievements of others are more than the small snarls of a bitter man resentful of the world's indifference to his own work: they are indicative of an

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Butler, Further Extracts, 62, and Jones, Memoir, I, 364.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Further Extracts, 332.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Butler to Miss Savage, 1873, Letters, 40.

<sup>4</sup>Butler, Further Extracts, 158.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 340.

<sup>7</sup>Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 190.



inner conflict. His frequent appeals to Miss Savage to support his literary judgments reveal the uneasiness he felt in running counter to current critical opinion. As a writer he had to have a reputation for some literary tastes: like railway stock and British Consuls, Shakespeare, Homer, Bunyan, and Swift were safe, and therefore worthy of the investment of his time. His note written in 1897 expressing his distrust in the permanence of Maeterlinck's success corroborates, I believe, my contention:

Now, true genius cannot so soon be recognized. If a man of 35 can get such admiration he is probably a very good man, but he is not one of those who will redeem Israel; and at my age I turn to these alone or, at any rate, to such as I believe to be these alone.<sup>1</sup>

Circumstances of birth had debarred him from being one of the aristocrats; nothing was to deprive him of the satisfaction of identification with the literary elect.

In my analysis of Butler's taste in literature it is perhaps unfair to have placed so much weight on evidence contained in the Note-Books where many of his comments were intended, perhaps, for witticisms rather than for sober critical reflections, for when he writes at some length about an author he admires, his criticism is not all one-sided, and shows both sensitivity and discernment.<sup>2</sup> However, it cannot be denied that Butler condemned many writers without a fair trial; Carlyle's worship of Goethe, Morley's

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Further Extracts, 319.

<sup>2</sup> See Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 188.



faith in Matthew Arnold, and Shaw's support of Ibsen made each of these writers suspect in Butler's eyes.

At Cambridge Butler's religious beliefs were for a long time thoroughly orthodox. Miss Savage later questioned the literalness of Theobald's belief as described in The Way of All Flesh, and mentioned three Cambridge men of the same period whom she knew to have been more rational; but in a note added to the letter<sup>1</sup> 1902 Butler stoutly maintained, "We never met a single man, who doubted the literal truth of every detail in the N.T. If we had, we should have cut him."<sup>1</sup> Butler's hero, Ernest, parodied the Simeonite tract with a satire on cleanliness in which he urged the Simeonites to acquire a more intimate knowledge of the use of soap and water, but the tract which Butler actually wrote against the Simeonites was not quite so coarse. His hardest hit was to imply that they were whitened sepulchres. His warning that, "Men are disgusted with religion if it is placed before them at unseasonable times, in unseasonable places and clothed in a most unseemly dress,"<sup>2</sup> is interesting as it comes strangely from the pen of one who was to devote much of what he called his Opus One to the mockery of conventional Victorian religion. The three points upon which Butler chides the Simeonites seem to be closely related to the very

<sup>1</sup> Butler's note added to a letter from Miss Savage, 1883, Letters, 304.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, A First Year, 59.



basis of Mr. Higgs,<sup>1</sup> bewilderment with the token worship of the Erewhonian Musical Banks. Consider, for a moment, Butler's first reprimand to the Simeonites of "unseasonable times:" Higgs, it will be recalled, was very puzzled by the strictly seasonable worship of the male Erewhonians when he noted that to the Musical Banks "the ladies generally went alone; as indeed was the case in most families, except on state occasions."<sup>2</sup> Again, Butler's second rebuke of "unseasonable places" would have fallen strangely upon the ears of Higgs who saw signs of general indifference to the banks, but was reassured by one of the managers that all would be well as "they had put fresh stained-glass windows into all the banks in the country, and repaired the buildings, and enlarged the organs."<sup>3</sup> And finally, the last taunt of "unseemly dress" would have surprised Butler's hero who looked askance at the currency of the Musical Banks when he noted that "notwithstanding the beauty of the designs, the material on which they were stamped was as nearly valueless as possible."<sup>4</sup> It is evident that "Erewhon Butler" held very different views from the young Samuel who insisted upon the correct observance of the outward forms of religion

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Higgs is the name given the hero of Erewhon in Erewhon Revisited.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Erewhon, 136.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.



and who found the unconventional approach of the Simeonites to be such bad form.

To understand the violence of Butler's later reaction against his orthodox upbringing, one must consider the strictness of the views held at Langar. To have been the son of an Anglican canon and the grandson of a bishop may appear to be enough to explain the extreme nature of Butler's early orthodoxy, but there is an additional factor which made rigid conformity with the Church of England inescapable. Before her marriage, Butler's mother had been a Unitarian, and there is usually no convert more zealous than one who has changed her faith for the sake of matrimony. Although there was much visiting between the Worsleys and the Butlers, the difference in religious views was an obstacle to complete friendliness. The thoroughness of Mrs. Butler's conversion is best exemplified by the attitude of her children to the Worsleys. Butler's sister May refused to be her cousin's bridesmaid as she was apprehensive about taking part in a Unitarian ceremony, and Butler himself wrote to his aunt from New Zealand confessing the narrowness of the views he had held while working as a lay assistant in London:

Do you remember what excuses I made to avoid dining with you all on Christmas Day when I was in Heddon Street? I gave in weakly and wrongly in my then state of mind; I actually deemed that I was committing a sin in dining with Unitarians on Christmas Day. Thank Heaven I could now eat two dinners with you all on Good Friday itself and not feel the smallest



compunction of conscience; the worst of it is that in the total wreck of my own past orthodoxy I fear I may be as much too sceptical as then too orthodox.<sup>1</sup>

The question immediately arises as to what incident or influence caused Butler to move from complete orthodoxy to extreme scepticism within the short space of two years. Both Jones and Mrs. Stillman present us with the picture of Butler, prior to taking his degree in 1858, studiously examining the Christian evidences in preparation for ordination. Mrs. Stillman writes:

For it was without doubt and without the expectation of doubt, merely from an instinctive probity and sense of order, that he now set himself to examine his orthodox beliefs with his own eyes. He read everything he could find on the subject, but it was only what other people had said, and the Gospels in English were only what other people had understood. He must clear these intervening growths and get to the source. So he began to study the Greek text with minute care.<sup>2</sup>

To fill out his picture of young Butler groping his way out of the narrow religious beliefs that had been instilled at home, at school, and at college, Jones dips into both The Way of All Flesh and The Fair Haven. Through Jones's eyes we see Butler reading Dean Alford's notes, and making a close study of the Greek Testament prior to his graduation in 1858.<sup>3</sup> The thoroughness with which Butler carried out his later religious, scientific, and literary researches

<sup>1</sup>Butler to Mrs. Philip Worsley, September 19, 1861, quoted in Garnett, Samuel Butler and his Family Relations, 162.

<sup>2</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 43.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 59-60.



makes the portrait, presented by these two biographers, of Butler's youthful sincerity in thus preparing himself for ordination extremely credible, but, unfortunately, I believe it can be proven false. Whatever factor, or factors, propelled Butler along the road towards skepticism, it was certainly not any minute study of the Greek Testament undertaken in the spring of 1858 that gave the initial push.

Because Ernest studied for ordination in the spring of 1858, Butler's biographers Jones, Stillman, and Henderson would have us believe that Butler did also. Mrs. Stillman obviously had every confidence in Jones, for she refers to the Memoir in her preface as a "primary source," and praises Jones as an impartial biographer who "disentangled from fiction and controversy" the vast amount of biographical detail embedded in Butler's works.<sup>1</sup> Chapter V of the first volume of the Memoir, which covers the period 1858 - 1859, is a rich example of Jones's methods in unravelling fact from fiction. Jones opens his chapter with a quotation from The Way of All Flesh, and then, to give us a view of the narrowness of Butler's youthful religious training, proceeds to paraphrase, without indicating that he is doing so, material from Butler's fictitious correspondence "A Clergyman's Doubts," which appeared in The Examiner in 1879. To have thus lifted material from a series of feigned letters

<sup>1</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, Preface, vii.



in which an older Butler, with wicked tongue in cheek, posed as an "Earnest Clergyman" protesting against the one-sidedness of his early training when confronted by the dilemma of a lost faith, is, to say the least, misleading, if not actually the same type of deception that Butler himself labelled as "monstrous." Jones adds to his offence by proceeding in the very next paragraph to quote openly from the correspondence, which, of course, leads the reader to assume that his first remarks were drawn from a more reliable source.<sup>1</sup> Muggeridge, too, quotes the original passage as an accurate description of Butler's mental state as a young man, but, like Miss Savage, he finds himself harboring doubts, for he observes:

None the less, it remains an astonishing fact, as Miss Savage remarked in one of her letters about The Way of All Flesh, that a person of Butler's intellectual attainments, who could write an essay like "On English Composition and Other Matters" when he was an undergraduate, and get a first in Classics after only one year's reading, should never have questioned, for instance, the literal accuracy of the Book of Genesis.<sup>2</sup>

"An astonishing fact" is an understatement; such naiveté in an independent thinker such as Butler, even a youthful and a very orthodox Butler, is incredible.

Returning to Jones's efforts at disentanglement, one finds the biographer supporting his picture of Butler

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jones, Memoir, I, 58, and Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 58.

<sup>2</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 59.



studying the Greek Testament before graduation by conjecturing, with what seems to be a studied innocence, about two copies of the book with marginal notes that are in possession of St. John's College. He remarks:

I imagine that he wanted more than one copy for convenience in travelling, --keeping one at Cambridge and the other at Langar, for instance. The notes do not extend over the whole of the two books; and I think he must have had a third copy, now lost, with notes covering the parts un-adnotated [sic] in these two copies.<sup>1</sup>

Although this piece of idle speculation at least has the value of indicating that Jones had not discussed these early studies of the Greek Testament with Butler himself, it is hardly convincing evidence of Butler's zeal in the spring of 1858. The fact that St. John's possesses two annotated copies does not prove that the research was done at Cambridge. Jones was perfectly aware that Butler was engaged in serious study of the Greek Testament while living on his lonely sheep-run in New Zealand<sup>2</sup> where, I believe, the bulk of the research was done. That Butler was able to earn a first class degree in classics despite having spent two-thirds of his time at Cambridge reading for mathematics, gives a strong indication that he would have had little opportunity for the theological studies that Jones attributes to this period. Although there is a possibility that Butler,

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. See p. 98 and p. 104.



like Ernest, may have begun reading for ordination at Cambridge in the May term of 1858, Jones's own evidence makes this idea unlikely:

He was bracketed 12th in the Classical Tripos of 1858, and then went to London and began to prepare for ordination, living and working among the poor as an amateur lay assistant under the Rev. Philip Perring, who had been an old pupil of Dr. Butler at Shrewsbury, and was at that time curate in the parish of St. James's, Piccadilly.<sup>1</sup>

The strongest support for my contention that Jones and other biographers have pre-dated Butler's serious theological studies<sup>2</sup> by a year is contained in a letter which Butler wrote to his father in March, 1859, "I am reading for my voluntary now and also the Greek Testament, but not with a view to the Carus; though if the Carus is the searching examination that the Classical Tripos is I ought to be in a fair way to do well in it."<sup>3</sup> Had Butler been engaged in serious theological studies at Cambridge a year earlier, he would scarcely have written to his father in this fashion in 1859.

It may be argued that whether Butler began his critical examination of the Christian evidences at Cambridge in 1858 or in 1859 is not really significant, but the point is an

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 60.

<sup>2</sup>Possibly some theological study was compulsory, as Charles Darwin notes that as late as 1831 Paley's Evidences of Christianity and Moral Philosophy were required reading for the B.A. examination. The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Butler to Canon Butler, March 15, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler: The Incarnate Bachelor, 30. Hereafter in the thesis this title will be shortened to Samuel Butler.



extremely important one, as in 1858 Butler was apparently contemplating a future in the Anglican Church, while by March, 1859, he had no intention of being ordained. When the significance of this point is realized, another problem presents itself: why should Butler have been studying for theological examinations after he had decided he would not enter the ministry? To find an answer to the compound problem of what first of all turned Butler against ordination, and then of what subsequently led him to study the Greek Testament after he had decided not to take Orders, one is forced to examine very closely all the evidence pertaining to the years 1858 - 1859 that is available.

In his autobiographical notes Butler writes:

At Cambridge I began to write a little, but had no idea of taking to literature, and always supposed that I was going into the Church as soon as I had taken my degree.

In the summer of 1858 I began to prepare for Orders by going to work as an amateur lay assistant under the advice of the Rev. P. Perring, then Curate of St. James's, Piccadilly, but I was never officially connected with the working of the parish. I lived among the poor and worked among them; but soon discovering that I could not take the teaching of the Church as seriously as I thought a clergyman ought to take it, in the spring of 1859 I left London and returned to Cambridge.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Butler's perturbation over his discovery, while engaged in working as a lay assistant, that one could not

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 5-6.



tell an unbaptized boy from one who had received the sacrament is so well known that his resultant shaken faith is generally accepted as the cause of his refusal to be ordained.<sup>1</sup> Butler has his hero, John Pickard Owen, of The Fair Haven make a similar shocking discovery. John Pickard's rector lost his temper and tried to silence his enquiries, so that the boy "became suspicious that a pre-conceived opinion was being defended at the expense of honest scrutiny, and was thus driven upon his own unaided investigation."<sup>2</sup> Butler endowed Owen with many of his own characteristics,<sup>3</sup> and when William Bickersteth Owen speaks of "the dark unhappy time" when his brother "had bullied himself, or been bullied into infidelity," we feel that the shadow of a familiar enemy has fallen across the page. When John Pickard Owen himself refers to his failure to get help from the person to whom he had confided his theological difficulties, the shadow becomes substance:

I was met with anger and impatience. There was an instinct which told me that my opponent had never heard a syllable against his own convictions, and was determined not to hear one: on this I assumed rashly that he must have good reason for his resolution; and doubt ripened into disbelief.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jones, Memoir, I, 61; Stillman, Samuel Butler, 44; Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 61; Henderson, Samuel Butler, 25.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Fair Haven, 18.

<sup>3</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 98-99.

<sup>4</sup>Butler, The Fair Haven, 67.



The Fair Haven, then, presents a plausible answer to my compound problem: practical experience in the field had raised religious doubts that had never occurred to Butler before, and his failure to receive sympathetic attention regarding his problems from his father, imbued in him the desire to master the subject, not, as Jones and Mrs. Stillman would have us believe, to prepare himself for a high calling, but to provide himself with a defence against being pushed into a life which his whole nature found abhorrent.

Muggeridge wickedly suggests that Butler's real reason for refusing to be ordained was a snobbish one, "Butler's own determination not to go into the Church was based on the same reason as Ernest's to get out of it. He felt that, as a clergyman, he would be looked down on by Nice People..."<sup>1</sup> Although Muggeridge obviously is being unfair, it cannot be denied that life in a London slum must have been repugnant to one with Butler's passion for cleanliness, orderliness, and intellectual conversation.

Butler's progression towards scepticism lacked the range and rapidity of that of the remarkable John Pickard Owen, for it will be remembered that Butler's orthodoxy was still sufficiently strict to make the prospect of a Unitarian Christmas dinner distasteful at the close of 1858.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 58.

<sup>2</sup>Vide ante, 53.



Having satisfied two paternal wishes, first, by having taken honors in classics, and, secondly, by having tried parish work for six months in London, Butler must have felt that he would now be free to pursue his own interests in art and music when he returned to Cambridge in the spring of 1859 to try for a fellowship or pupils, for he wrote to his father:

Having read so much at subjects which I never cared a straw about I am naturally anxious to make use of the opportunity you gave me to apply what little I may have learnt to practical use in subjects wherein I take a lively interest, and only pleaded for till October, and that too with a chance (which still remains) of getting work in the meantime.<sup>1</sup>

Although his half year in Heddon Street had done much to remove the blinkers he felt his up-bringing had imposed on him, he still had confidence in his father's integrity in money matters. The spring of 1859 was a period marked by shock waves travelling between Langar and Cambridge. Canon Butler became aware that Samuel had become "discontented with the notion of taking Orders"<sup>2</sup> and Butler learned that there had been strings attached to two handsome promises his father had made.

According to Mrs. Stillman, the Reverend Thomas Butler had promised his son an allowance until he should become

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Butler to Canon Butler, March 15, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 29.

<sup>2</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel, March 12, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 28.



self-supporting.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Stillman is not quite correct, for actually the Canon's promise had been a much more generous one, and its sudden retraction sent Butler into an indignant rage. The intensity of the shock of the broken promise was sufficient to jar him into a surprising admission in a letter to his mother. As in editing this particular letter Jones was forced to remove the remark that cast a reflection on his picture of young Butler, and as Henderson also made deletions when quoting from the same letter, it is too hazardous to attempt a reconstruction of the original. As the evidence is an important clue to the cause of conflict in Butler's character, however, I shall take the liberty of quoting both versions. Here follows the revealing letter as presented by Jones:

He wrote to his mother hoping that his letter to his father of the 10th March was not calculated to annoy him "though I fear it was not very sane," but it had to be written in a hurry. He continues:

"Had he said to me: 'I give you this allowance till you can make something of your own, and then, when you can find your own living, it will cease,' I could readily understand his feeling hurt and vexed that I should be spurning on him and not finding something to do as speedily as possible, which of course any gentleman would do. But when he said that he would give it me over and above anything else I could make, you, I know, will understand how galling it must be to a person to have the threat of 'docking one's allowance' (as if I had done something scandalous) offered on such short a notice. You cannot imagine how cut up I have been about it, and how thoroughly undeserved I feel such language to be....

<sup>1</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, 45.



There is a Cambridge School of Art established here, and I have joined it and am receiving first-rate drawing lessons which I enjoy exceedingly. Tamplin superintends my music."<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen from this excerpt that Butler had been led to expect an allowance that was to continue even after he should be self-supporting.

The same letter, as quoted by Henderson, is more revealing still:

The same day he wrote to his mother, [March 10th] saying that he hoped that his answer to Papa's note 'was not calculated to annoy him ... though I fear it was not very sane, for I had to answer the same day of course, and had little time to concoct any scheme whatever.... I wish I had never said a word about not wishing to be ordained and then all would have been well. You, I know, will understand how galling it must be to a person to have the threat of docking one's allowance (as if I had done something scandalous) offered on so short a notice. You cannot imagine how cut up I have been about it and how thoroughly undeserved I feel such language to be.' He adds that he feels like throwing up the allowance and trying to live without it--'only I know Papa didn't mean that, and know that it would be cutting off my nose to spite my face.'<sup>2</sup>

It is surprising that the damning phrase which I have underlined was not pounced upon by the avaricious Mr. Muggeridge as a splendidly combustible piece of tarry timber for the bonfire in which he roasts the Earnest Atheist. That he did not do so, suggests that there may have been two versions of the controversial correspondence of 1859, and that Jones

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 63.

<sup>2</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 27. (The italics are mine.)



may not have been quite such a villain as his textual differences have led me to believe.<sup>1</sup> However, regardless of the exact wording of the original letter, there is enough material in the above excerpts to throw a new light upon the quarrel of 1859 and the characters of the three correspondents.

None of Mrs. Butler's letters of this period has been published, but her son's letters to her reveal a frankness which shows that he was not quite so quick "to find her out" as he would have us believe. No matter how damaging to the maintenance of peaceful relations with his father were the confidences of her son, she appears to have forwarded her letters from Samuel to Canon Butler with a Christina-like promptitude and duplicity.<sup>2</sup>

The letter to his father to which Butler refers in his letter to his mother, if not actually "calculated to annoy," was intended to present a disturbing threat which was indeed but a "concocted scheme" of the moment and entirely lacking in sincerity, for haughtily he states:

The thing I would most gladly do is emigrate. I have long wished to do so, but said nothing about it because Tom has already gone, but upon my word, if you bid me suggest anything, it is the only thing I

<sup>1</sup>Vide infra, 70.

<sup>2</sup>Vide infra, 72, 74-75.



can think of which would be at once congenial to my feelings and likely to fill my pocket.<sup>1</sup>

The reference to his brother's departure from England is the turn of the screw, for one of the Canon's letters shows plainly enough that he had no wish that his eldest son leave the country.<sup>2</sup> That Butler's remark is insincere can be gathered from the fact that he had no plans for making a living in a new country, for he himself admits that his cotton-growing scheme in Liberia is "not very sane;" and his later letters show that he had not formed a preference for any particular country.

Certainly, some excuse can be made for Butler's admission to his mother that he wished he had kept silent about not wishing to be ordained, for he had been looking forward to six months at Cambridge with freedom for his own studies before settling down to a career, and had apparently been assured of an allowance for life. His father, he felt, had played him false, and Butler must have believed, and quite rightly, that it was his own frankness that had caused the promises to be drastically modified. The sudden withdrawal of financial security was the cause, I believe, of Butler's strange life-long pre-occupation with the veneration of money; and his sense

<sup>1</sup>Butler to his father, March 10th, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 27.

<sup>2</sup>Vide infra, 71.



of shock that his father should break his word does something to explain Butler's own much criticized, over-zealous integrity in maintaining his allowance to Charles Paine Pauli even when faced with bankruptcy.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem from her dependence upon material quoted in Jones's Memoir and in Mrs. Garnett's Samuel Butler and his Family Relations that Mrs. Stillman had no access to the family papers. Consequently, she summed up the "long and painful correspondence" of 1859 by finding the Reverend Thomas Butler's letters to be "full of the bitterness of intolerance and misunderstanding" in the face of which Butler remained "patient and conciliatory."<sup>2</sup> Nothing could be further from the truth. It cannot be denied that Jones contrived a tangled web for subsequent biographers of Samuel Butler by printing carefully edited samples of Butler's letters but none of the father's. In the course of his editing he substituted a letter which Butler had adapted and shortened for George Pontifex to send to Theobald in The Way of All Flesh, and suggested that the Pontifex letter did not differ significantly from the original. Jones's excuse for not seeking permission to publish the Canon's letters was that if permission were refused he would be courting a snub, and if it were granted he would

<sup>1</sup>Vide infra, Chapter V.

<sup>2</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 45.



have been placing himself under an obligation. Such reasoning appears to be specious enough, but, in reality Jones's excuse seems closer to being a shield for sophistry. Mr. Henderson takes a tolerant view in his preface, for he says, "Jones was, nevertheless, hampered by his inability, or unwillingness, to make use of the family correspondence, and what he gives us in the Memoir (1919) is substantially Butler's own view of himself and his father."<sup>1</sup> The point which Mr. Henderson, in his desire to be charitable, overlooks is that whatever restriction was placed upon Jones's quoting from Thomas Butler's letters, none was placed upon his reading. That Jones should have had the privilege of reading the correspondence carefully and yet persisted in creating a wrong impression to be picked up by subsequent biographers and writers, is little short of infamous.

Mrs. Garnett was the first to be incensed by the damage the Memoir had added to that done by the attack made on the Butler family in The Way of All Flesh. She made a vain attempt to disinter the loving-kindness of the Butler family relationships which Butler had treated with the quick-lime of satire in his novel. She remedied some of the injustice which Jones had done the Canon by publishing one of his milder letters in which he discussed, for his wife's benefit, Samuel's

<sup>1</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, Preface, vii.



character, abilities (or, more accurately, the lack of them), life at Cambridge, and his vague plans for October, but, unfortunately, Mrs. Garnett added a strange quirk to the already mysterious correspondence by dating the letter as November 12, 1859, a time when young Samuel's future had been decided, for he was then well on his way to New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Had Mrs. Garnett had a somewhat greater regard for the importance of dating evidence as accurately as possible, it would have been helpful to know at what point in the dispute Canon Butler was struck with the fear that his son might become a dissenting minister.<sup>2</sup>

In 1936 Mr. Muggeridge quoted more generously from the correspondence of 1859, but perhaps not so much to vindicate the father as to vilify the son. In 1953 Philip Henderson, believing that Butler had been buried under a mass of detail in the Memoir, undertook a more compact biography, but in spite of the limitations of space necessitated by such a plan, Mr. Henderson, realizing the significance of the controversial correspondence, devoted several pages to extracts from the letters between Butler and his parents. However, indebted as any student of Butler must feel towards Mr. Henderson, his very generosity, it must be confessed, intensifies the bewilderment of the researcher, rather than clarifying older mysteries. Mr. Muggeridge reproduced in

<sup>1</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and his Family Relations, 156.

<sup>2</sup>For example, Mrs. Garnett dates a letter which discusses the Canon's holiday plans after his death had occurred.



The Earnest Atheist the original letter which Butler adapted for the purpose of rendering Theobald's ear more sensitive to the call of the Church in The Way of All Flesh. There is not one single dash, space, or hiatus to indicate that the letter does not appear in its entirety, and yet Mr. Henderson quotes other passages from what is obviously the same letter. The difference in the material quoted cannot be attributed to any unscholarly disregard for the niceties of editing, for, although Mr. Muggeridge can be accused of creating impressions by means of skilful lifting out of context, cunning juxtapositions, calculated fabrication, and the diabolical admixture of fact and fiction, his quotations from other letters in the correspondence under discussion are made in the conventional manner. The mystery is intensified by the fact that Mr. Muggeridge also produces the much-quoted George Pontifex letter for comparison with the Canon's, yet it is only in the passages from Mr. Henderson's version of Butler's father's letter that the famous Pontifex line, "You shall not receive a sixpence from me till you come to your senses," appears in its original form. Butler added notes to this correspondence in 1901 when he was "editing his remains," and there is the possibility that, as in the case of the Miss Savage correspondence, he may have actually recopied entire letters. Although such an action would explain the textual differences



to which I have drawn attention, it is unbelievable that such an assiduous self-advocate as Butler would have deleted such a specific example of his father's bad-tempered meanness.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the reason for the diverse forms of the letters, both Henderson and Muggeridge are agreed that, contrary to the impression created by The Way of All Flesh and the Memoir, Canon Butler was not trying to compel Butler to take Orders. Although he was disappointed and vexed by Samuel's decision not to enter the Church, the Canon's letters show a surprising open-mindedness towards other professions, which the following quotation makes abundantly clear: "I should greatly regret to see you leave England. There is plenty of work to be done, and that good work. And I don't feel sure that a man out of Orders may not be more useful than if he were ordained."<sup>2</sup>

It is astonishing that Mrs. Stillman thought that Butler was "patient and conciliatory"<sup>3</sup> in the discussions about his future, for even if she had but access to the Memoir, the excerpts in it display his indignation, stubbornness, and even arrogance. Mrs. Stillman's eye may have

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 65-67 with Henderson, Samuel Butler, 31.

<sup>2</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel Butler, March 12, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 28.

<sup>3</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 45.



been caught by the filial phrases, which appear in a letter to the Canon: "I will certainly go in for my Voluntary [Theological] in October if you wish it: I am sorry to say I have no additional pupil this term..."<sup>1</sup> But that she should have described the letter which Butler wrote to his mother one day later as being written with "firmness, forbearance and solemnity" reveals a surprising degree of partisanship. Butler, incensed by a letter he has received from his father which apparently either stated or implied that he was a "pig-headed fool," has come to a decision to be an artist, and he hurls his defiance at his mother:

I shall not try for pupils but devote myself entirely to the profession I intend to embark on--I have no time to lose. I should not either read for the Voluntary for which I see I should get plucked; there were many questions for which I should have been plucked this time if I had answered them as I believe they should be answered, and have not sufficient control over myself to write the received explanation when I do not believe it.<sup>2</sup>

It will be seen that the young man whose very orthodoxy caused him to find the prospect of a Unitarian Christmas feast distasteful, has in the space of a few months travelled far enough towards scepticism to now find the spiritual food offered by his own Church unpalatable. He goes on to speak of the estrangement between himself and his

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Butler to his father, May 9th, 1859, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 64-65.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Butler to his mother, May 10th, 1859, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 67-68.



father:

I never asked him for an allowance. What he gave I took and have employed well; for that capital so laid out I can show good interest--especially during the six months I was in Heddon Street; true, I fear the interest is not such as you like, but it is such as I feel all precious to me, though I see that this storm has been brought about by no other means. But for this I should have been quietly ordained and none of this sad business would ever have come about. But I say deliberately, it is better as it is for you and for my father and for me.<sup>1</sup>

He has been engaged in theological studies, for his letter of May 9th contained this challenge for his father, when he presented his specific objections to Article XV:

"... the opinion I have formed is one which I am ready to resign if fairly beaten. At the same time I must fairly confess that I believe the mass of evidence would make far more strongly with me than against me."<sup>2</sup> To imply to an Anglican canon that he has not really studied his doctrine can hardly be termed conciliatory behaviour. Again I reiterate my point that it was not for the purpose of preparing himself for ordination that Butler applied himself to a serious study of the Christian evidences in 1859 (not in 1858, as Jones and Stillman would have us believe), but for the sole purpose of being able to defeat his father in religious debate. The Canon took up the

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Butler to his mother, May 10th, 1859, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 67-68.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Butler to his father, May 9th, 1859, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 64.



challenge, but before he could send his answer he received his son's ultimatum, and, therefore, wrote instead a reproachful, dignified, and, for him, surprisingly eloquent letter in which he reviewed their lengthy dispute over Samuel's career, and ended sadly, "I have written a long letter to you about doctrinal difficulties, <sup>it</sup> <sub>^</sub> is quite in vain to send it now."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Henderson's happy lack of bias permits him to be very fair to both father and son when discussing this momentous quarrel, but his sympathy with Butler is a little strained: first, by a misconception concerning Butler's moral courage, and secondly, by an astonishing misunderstanding of his financial position. In all fairness to Butler, I feel that these errors should be examined as Mr. Henderson's biography is the most recent study of Butler, and also because his book is bound to have a wide circulation as Mr. Henderson has reproduced in it much documentary material never before published. The misconception about Butler's moral courage comes, I believe, from misreading the following passage in Canon Butler's letter of March 12th:

Dear Sam,

I don't want to drive you into any line of life you dislike, neither will I object to your staying up till October. But you write indefinitely, say you are working but not a word to lead me to grasp how or at what. But that your mother forwarded a letter this

<sup>1</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel, May, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 35.



morning, I should have no knowledge whatever but that you had become some way or other discontented with the notion of taking Orders and have no other distinct view.<sup>1</sup>

In his comment on this passage Mr. Henderson reveals that he has missed the significance of the second but in the third sentence of the letter:

Not only is Canon Butler not trying to force his son to be ordained, but it appears he only heard in a roundabout way that Sam had any objection to being ordained. Evidently Butler did not have the courage to tell his father of his objections straight out, so that his father's bewilderment is understandable.<sup>2</sup>

That Canon Butler knew of his son's disinclination to enter the Church is clear enough both from the text of the letter just quoted, and from the letter to which it refers in which Samuel confided to his mother that he wished he had never mentioned wanting to be ordained, and in which he describes his studies in art and music.<sup>3</sup> Canon Butler's letter of March 9th also refers to Samuel's opposition to ordination.<sup>4</sup> Butler had withheld from his father only the information that he was studying art and music, but he had not withheld it, I am convinced, because of any lack of moral courage.

Mr. Henderson's second slip is much more serious, and is exceedingly difficult to understand. He comments, "On

<sup>1</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel, March 12th quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 29.

<sup>3</sup>Vide ante 63-64 (1), 64 (2)

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 26.



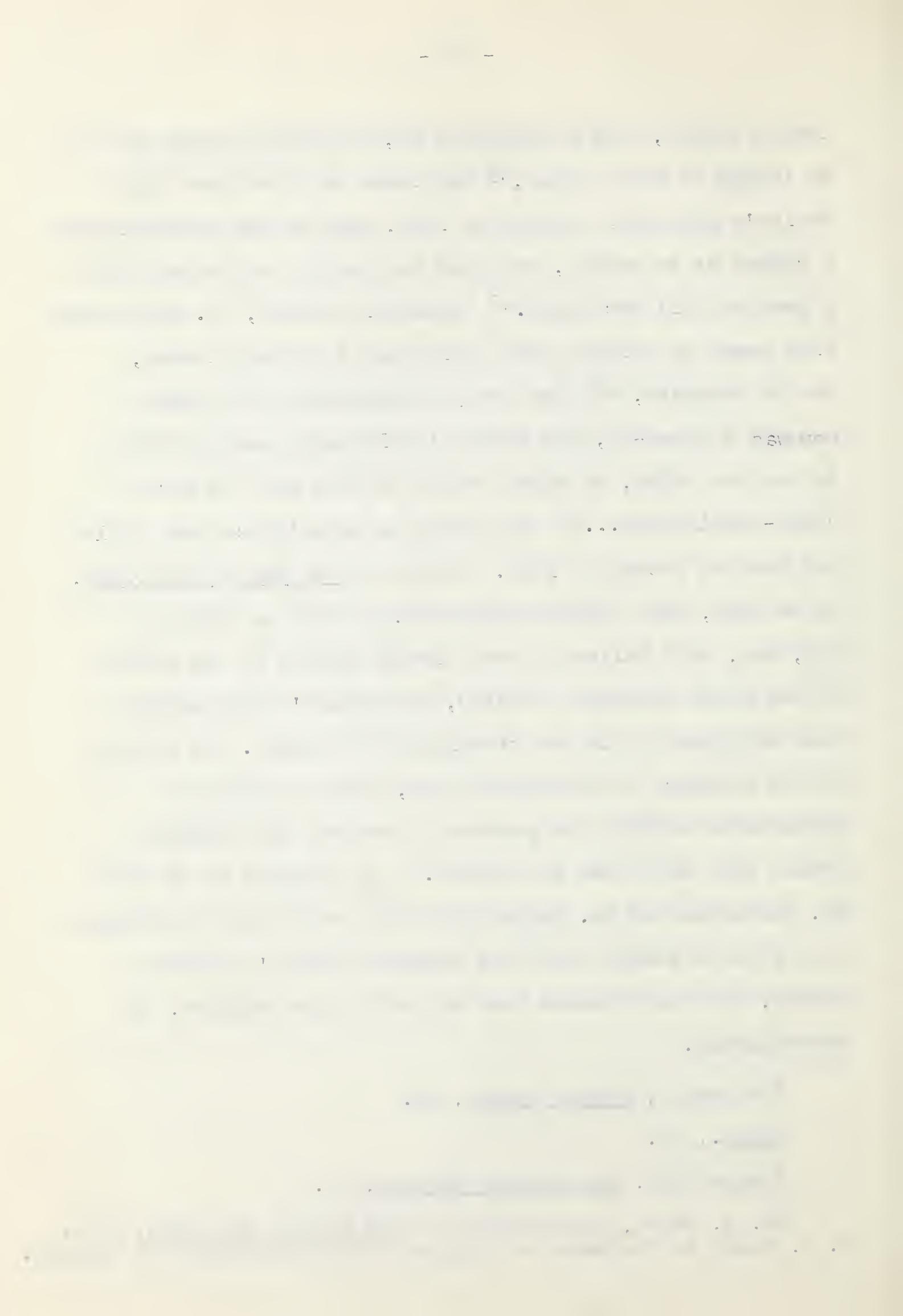
coming of age, Butler inherited £5,000 which brought him in an income of £250 a year,<sup>1</sup> and later he points out that Butler's financial straits in 1859, when he was contemplating a career as an artist, were not very severe as he had "£250 a year to fall back upon."<sup>2</sup> Strangely enough, Mr. Muggeridge also seems to believe that Butler had a private income, for he observes, "It had not yet occurred to him that he now was a grown-up, and with a little money coming to him in his own right, he might refuse to take part in such a cross-examination..."<sup>3</sup> But there is no evidence that Butler had such an income in 1859. Ernest in The Way of All Flesh, to be sure, does indeed inherit £5,000 when he comes of age, but, as I believe I have already proved in the matter of the Greek Testament studies, all Butler's biographers tend to identify him too closely with his hero. So strong is the tendency to confuse the two, that we find one commentator working the process in reverse and endowing Ernest with more than one sister.<sup>4</sup> It occurred to me that Mr. Henderson and Mr. Muggeridge might have found a reference to a private income when they examined Butler's private papers, but the evidence that no such income existed, is overwhelming.

<sup>1</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>3</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 54.

<sup>4</sup>M. D. Zabel, Introduction to The Way of All Flesh, xxiv. M. D. Zabel is Professor of English in the University of Chicago.



Mr. Henderson himself quotes from the letter in which Butler plans to make the £270 which he has in hand in the spring of 1859 last for three years while he studies art. Butler states that after this sum has been exhausted he hopes to borrow from friends, or, if the worst came to the worst, to try to raise money on his reversion to the Shrewsbury property which would come to him by his grandfather's will eventually.<sup>1</sup> The first part of the plan was not unfeasible as in the middle of the nineteenth century many an Anglican curate was faced with the problem of maintaining a family on £90 a year. Mr. Henderson quotes another letter in which Butler bravely faces the possibility that his allowance from his father will promptly cease once he embarks on his preparations for a career in art:

The alternative of grinding my seven or eight hours a day--for I cannot tell how long--in London--at work I hate--on a £100 a year--that is the law. The alternative of continuing a master on £150 or £200 per annum during the best years of my life--this is the school. Hard work and little to eat with hope at the end of it and a heart and soul in the work--this is the artist. Can you wonder which I choose?<sup>2</sup>

Butler would have hardly expected to have little to eat had he had a private income of £250 a year, and that sum added to what he could make as a schoolmaster would have been a handsome income for a single young man in the year

<sup>1</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 33. (Quoted in full in Jones, Memoir, I, 67.)

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Butler to his father, May 10, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 33.



1859. Jones draws attention to the differences between Butler and Ernest thus: "He lodged in Heddon Street, Regent Street, and his life there is faithfully presented as Ernest's life in Ashpit Place, except that he was never ordained as Ernest was; nor did he then lose any money--he had then no money to lose..."<sup>1</sup> In view of the evidence he was actually handling, Mr. Henderson's misconception is incomprehensible.

Because Mr. Henderson's sympathy with the would-be artist was somewhat limited by his mistaken belief that Butler was actually financially independent of Langar, he has, in his efforts to be fair to the father, failed to note the aura of animosity that clings to all the references Canon Butler made to his son. Mr. Henderson notes that the father is "deficient in fundamental sympathy and understanding" and that the only warmth in the letters was that generated by anger,<sup>2</sup> but the belittling comments scattered through Canon Butler's letters betray more than misunderstanding: they reveal a deep-seated spiteful jealousy. To his wife he wrote:

His life sounds all delightful, but one does not see any aim or object.... He talks of writing; but it requires more than his powers to do this. He has not that in him that will be read. He is too bumptious and not sufficiently practical.... And at college he's

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 60.

<sup>2</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 37.



a greater man than he would be elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The Canon, it will be seen, was already regretting his promise that Samuel could have another half year at Cambridge, if it were to be a pleasant time of music and art with an occasional essay in The Eagle to win him the admiration of his college friends. The old desire that Samuel should actually suffer is evident in this admission concerning his offer to buy his son a commission in the army: "The necessity for obeying was the chief inducement in my mind to make the sacrifice which would be necessary to buy your commission. But the risk not only of your not liking it but of your getting into difficulties with your superior officers is too great."<sup>2</sup> One feels that the Canon would like to have "Sam" back in the drawing-room at Langar as a small boy again so that he could beat him. Although the Canon had no objections to other professions and careers (save art and medicine), he was quick to throw cold water on any of his son's desperate proposals, for he observed that Samuel "has shown no decided genius for drawing," is "unfitted for farming," and lacks "the mercantile element in his character" which was necessary to ensure success as a book-seller. In his son's artistic talent the Canon had

<sup>1</sup>Canon Butler to Mrs. Butler, November 12, [May?] 1859, quoted in Garnett, Samuel Butler and his Family Relations, 156.

<sup>2</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel, May 9, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 31-32.



no faith beyond the possibility of Samuel's "learning to draw very nicely" in time, and he even expressed his doubt about the strength of his son's moral character: "Meanwhile your society is cast in with a set of men who as a class do not bear the highest character for morality, you are thrown into the midst of the most serious temptations, and if it is possible that you may stand it is also possible that you may fall."<sup>1</sup> This little piece of paternal nastiness has the value, at least, of indicating that Butler's life had been blameless up until then, for had there been any indiscretions of which the Canon was aware, he would have seized the opportunity of casting up past misdeeds. That Butler was hurt there can be no doubt, and one can quite forgive him for the vindictive glee with which he later adapted his father's remarks for Theobald and Christina in The Way of All Flesh.<sup>2</sup> Where his eldest son's character and abilities were concerned, the Canon's letters repeatedly indicate that he was a man of little faith.

The long altercation did not end with Butler's ultimatum that he would either turn artist or emigrate. The letters continued through the summer. The Canon made a desperate last attempt to interest his son in the diplomatic service,

<sup>1</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel, Aug., 3, 1859, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 39.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 193.



but it was of no use; at last he was forced to agree to the lesser evil of emigration. Butler chose the colony farthest from Langar, but his father persuaded him to consider the fact that it would take the greater part of a year to receive an answer to a letter if he settled in New Zealand. Butler agreed to the alternative choice, New Columbia, and planned to be across the Rockies by October, but at the last minute another change of plan was made and British Columbia lost the chance of claiming a remarkable citizen. On the 29th of September Butler embarked for New Zealand, and, although still an earnest Christian, celebrated the break with Langar by ceasing to say his customary morning and evening prayers.

Much has been written about Butler's long struggle to escape from the domination of his father, but he had not yet escaped, for, as long as the money flowed out to New Zealand, dutiful, lengthy letters with vivid descriptions of the topography, vegetation, and birds, and detailed accounts of the life of the colonists caught the mails to England. However, the Butler who boarded the Roman Emperor for the four month voyage to the other side of the world was a very different young man from the youth Canon Butler had introduced to Cambridge in 1854. Butler notes that the two years following his departure from England were marked by great intellectual growth, but he had already developed



his mental powers greatly during his Cambridge years. The letters written by the schoolboy of seventeen bear little resemblance to the mature writing of 1859 in which he shows a command of satire, eloquence, and precision, and not only the ability to present an argument with forceful clarity but also the intuitive power to detect the weak point in his adversary's defence. His faith in his religion had been a little weakened by his discoveries, while working in Heddon Street, concerning the efficacy of infant baptism, but his faith in himself had been completely restored by his successes at Cambridge, and immeasurably strengthened by the long conflict with his father.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### The New Zealand Interval and the Developing Conflict

...I felt an immense intellectual growth shortly after leaving England--a growth which has left me a much happier and more liberal-minded man.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the six months spent in Heddon Street, Samuel Butler had led a very comfortable life until he emigrated. The four-month voyage to New Zealand, however, brought him into contact with squalor and misery which, we gather from his letters home, he viewed with extreme revulsion. "No one in his right mind," he observes, "will go second class, if he can, by any hook or crook, raise enough money to go first."<sup>2</sup> Even one hundred years ago first-class passengers had certain diversions to mitigate the discomforts and boredom of the voyage, for, when the Roman Emperor was becalmed and their less fortunate fellow passengers had the alternative of either stifling in malodorous, crowded quarters or shivering on the open deck in the bone-chilling damp air, the "best set" escaped from the squalor and the stench at least:

...After lunch some ropes were arranged to hoist the ladies in a chair over the ship's side and lower them into the boat - a process which created much merriment. Into the boat we put half a dozen of champagne - a sight which gave courage to one or two to brave the

<sup>1</sup>Butler in a letter to his aunt, Mrs. Worsley, quoted in Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 162.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, A First Year, 82.



descent who had not previously ventured on such a feat. Then the ladies were pulled round the ship, and, when about a mile ahead of her, we drank the champagne and had a regular jollification. Returning to show them the seaweed, the little fishes looked so good that someone thought of a certain net wherewith the doctor catches ocean insects, porpytas, clios, spinulas, etc. With this we caught in half an hour amid much screaming, laughter, and unspeakable excitement, no less than 250 of them. They were about five inches long--funny little blue fishes with wholesome-looking scales. We ate them next day, and they were excellent.<sup>1</sup>

During the voyage Butler extended his musical accomplishments by learning to play the concertina and by organizing a choir, which gave him the opportunity to "form the acquaintance of many of the poorer passengers,"<sup>2</sup> and he broadened his intellectual outlook by reading Gibbon from whom, although he was shocked considerably by the historian's sarcasms, he fancied he "imbibed a calm and philosophical spirit of impartial and critical investigation."<sup>3</sup> One gathers, however, that even this philosophical spirit was somewhat strained by four months aboard the Roman Emperor, for after arriving at Christchurch he wrote of the changed appearance of the ship when he revisited it at Port Lyttelton:

How strangely changed the ship appeared! Sunny, motionless, and quiet; no noisy children, no

<sup>1</sup> Butler, A First Year, 78.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>3</sup> Butler in a letter to Philip Worsley, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 97.



slatternly, slipshod women rolling about the decks, no slush, no washing of dirty linen in dirtier water. There was the old mate in a clean shirt at last, leaning against the mainmast, and smoking his yard of clay; the butcher close-shaven and clean; the sailors smart, and welcoming us with a smile. It almost looked like going home.<sup>1</sup>

For the first time in his life Butler was now homeless. Port Lyttelton proved to be not much better than the ship, for ashore there was dust as well as dirt, but, characteristically, one of Butler's first acts as a colonist was to do something positive to improve the situation:

I went and helped Mr. and Mrs. R. to arrange their new house, i.e., R. and I scrubbed the floors of the two rooms they have taken with soap, scrubbing-brushes, flannel, and water, made them respectably clean, and removed his boxes into their proper places.<sup>2</sup>

Having to adapt to pioneer life was difficult for Butler, because, although he did not realize it, his Langar training had done him another injury in making him overly fastidious. Life in an English rectory, where a staff of servants had helped the Butler womenfolk make the domestic machinery function smoothly, had given Samuel no preparation for roughing it in a country where people slept without sheets, washed in the lake, and squatted on stones in a quagmire of a mud floor in a poorly thatched hut to eat their mutton with a minimum of "culinary apparatus." Later, when he had

<sup>1</sup>Butler, A First Year, 87.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.



gained a more intimate view of life in the new colony, the novelty of dealing with household tasks wore off, for in his Note-Books he reminisces with wry humor:

In New Zealand for a long time I had to do the washing up after each meal. I used to do the knives first, for it might please God to take me before I came to the forks, and then what a sell it would have been to have done the forks rather than the knives.<sup>1</sup>

However, these uncouth discoveries about the life of a rancher did not occur until much later. During his first evening in his lodging-house in Christchurch all his attempts to break into the conversation were ignored. He was forced to listen, and he learned about "sheep, horses, dogs, cattle, English grasses, paddocks and bush,"<sup>2</sup> which were to be his chief concern for the next four years.

He learned quickly and well, for the £5,000 advanced and lent by Canon Butler increased to £8,000 in a surprisingly short time. Although Butler spent some four and a half years in New Zealand, he was actually engaged in raising sheep for only about three of them, as he did not find a suitable tract of land until October 1860, and he spent the greater part of his last year in the colony living in Christchurch while he negotiated the sale of his run. Even though luck played a large part in Butler's financial success in that land values had increased remarkably, his achievement in

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 112.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, A First Year, 86.



developing a sheep-run of eight thousand acres in the incredibly brief period of three years testifies to Butler's industry and ability, and proves that the Canon was quite wrong in believing that his son's character lacked "the mercantile element." In May, 1861, Butler wrote a long letter to Langar explaining that his financial position was strained by the Canon's delay in advancing the last thousand pounds of promised capital. Even as a sheep-rancher Butler was still bothered by the problem of class:

I have been obliged to purchase [rams] at £3 a head; the rams I have are really very good and have thrown very fine lambs, but they are not calculated to place my flock among the picked and choice ones of the Settlement, and I am contented with nothing short.

...The usual custom is to exchange with your neighbors; if I had first-class rams I could exchange for first-class, having only good second-class I shall only get first-class by additional outlay.<sup>1</sup>

His letter shows his business acumen in his long-range plans for improving his holdings, stock, and equipment, and he speaks confidently of an annual income of £4,000 from a flock of twenty thousand sheep in eight years' time.<sup>2</sup> Whether the Canon was unimpressed by his son's plans or horrified by his prospects of great affluence is not certain, but again the father ran true to form and broke his promise.

<sup>1</sup> Butler in a letter to his father, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson quotes from the same letter and gives this figure as £400, but he obviously has misread, as that sum would be a ridiculously small return from a flock of twenty thousand sheep.



In all, Butler received £4,400 as an outright gift and a loan of an additional £600 for the New Zealand venture.

The prospect of a very large income in a comparatively short time was not enough to reconcile Butler to the hardships faced by the colonist. Many young Englishmen would have enjoyed the rough adventurous life in a new country, but Samuel Butler's disposition was not suited to standing the discomforts and loneliness of the pioneer, and, apart from a certain pride in his unsuspected hardihood, his feelings seem to have been divided between resentment and dissatisfaction. The treacherous rivers, which again and again he had to ford in order to reach his run, terrified him; the stubbornness and unpredictable tendencies of his bullocks infuriated him; the nuisance of having to "work like a common servant" cooking for eight men irked him; and, as he wished to expound his Greek Testament discoveries to a critical ear, his lack of intellectual companionship dismayed him. It is evident from his letters home that the philosophical spirit which he imagined he had acquired from Gibbon failed to aid him in adjusting to a new country and accepting its differences.

All his reactions were those of a typical Anglophile-- I might say of a very Victorian Anglophile. An older and very much changed Butler, who gleefully dipped into his grandfather's journal to extract suitable sentiments for



George Pontifex's diary in The Way of All Flesh, sneers at Victorian conventionality:

I felt as I read [the diary] that the author before starting had made up his mind to admire only what he thought it would be creditable in him to admire, to look at nature and art only through the spectacles that had been handed down to him by generation after generation of prigs and impostors. The first glimpse of Mont Blanc threw Mr. Pontifex into a conventional ecstasy. "My feelings I cannot express. I gasped, yet hardly dared to breathe, as I viewed for the first time the monarch of the mountains..."<sup>1</sup>

Small wonder that Butler in later years was afraid to look into his first book,<sup>2</sup> for the spectacles through which he himself as a young man had looked at Mount Cook might have been snatched from George Pontifex's very nose. Butler, too, experienced a respiratory difficulty: "...I was struck almost breathless by the wonderful mountain that burst upon my sight."<sup>3</sup> Too, an older Butler who derided a traveller who described the countryside near Caen as "Switzerland en petite" by observing that it was the unique characteristic of Switzerland not to be petite, might have winced at his own youthful reaction to magnificent scenery:

Though from my hut door I see mountains of 10,000 and 11,000 feet high, covered with glaciers, and presenting little apparent difference winter or summer, I cannot compare the scenery with the Swiss or Italian. One reason may be the want of association with human labor and sympathies. What charm the Swiss

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 14.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 288.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, A First Year, 113.



scenery derives from its châlets and villages perched upon the mountain sides. There is no history here, save in the immediate proximity of my hut the eye looks in vain for any trace of human handiwork and habitation.<sup>1</sup>

The eye that looked at New Zealand through Bishop Butler's spectacles was somewhat jaundiced as well:

Color is very scarce here. The flowers are few and ugly--decidedly ugly--poor imitations of our English ones. I do not know a single really nice flower that is natural to the place. The grass is yellow but not varied with the beautiful tints that are seen on English pasture.<sup>2</sup>

That the last two quotations were taken from a letter to his aunt in London proves that the disparagements of New Zealand in the letters to Langar were no mere device calculated to please his family, but were genuine expressions of Butler's honest opinion. The young Anglophile looked at the New Zealand environment with distaste, and summed up the whole vegetable and animal productions of <sup>the</sup> settlement <sup>^</sup> as "decidedly inferior in beauty and interest to those of the old world."<sup>3</sup> In a comment which reveals the querulousness of a disappointed child, he declared the Southern Cross a mere delusion: "It isn't a cross. It is a kite, a kite upside down, an irregular kite upside down, with only three respectable stars and one very poor and very much out of place."<sup>4</sup> Butler had a lot of growing-up to do in New Zealand.

<sup>1</sup>Butler in a letter to his aunt, Mrs. Worsley, quoted in Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 165.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, A First Year, 164.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 73.



Butler's reaction to this inferior environment was typical of the conventional English colonist; he proceeded to create an English atmosphere around him. He planted roses, stocks, sweet william, and wallflower in his garden; furnished his sitting-room with Cambridge pictures, books, and easy chairs; and, temporarily abandoning Handel, played Bach and Beethoven on the piano he had had dragged up the rocky gorges by bullock-dray. He rejoiced when he found The Idylls of the King under a rancher's bed (not because he was short of reading matter, but because the presence of the book in a rude hut indicated the high cultural level of the settlers), he exulted when he acquired a kitchen-hand who could starch the stiff collars that he prided himself on wearing even in the wilds, and once when caught in a snow-storm on the way to his homestead he set his men to sewing for the establishment:

The fall continued all that night, and in the morning we found ourselves thickly covered. It was still snowing hard, so there was no stirring. We read the novels, hemmed the towels, smoked, and took it philosophically.<sup>1</sup>

But in spite of his philosophical spirit and the English atmosphere he tried to create with flowers, books, music, and an insistence upon starched collars and hemmed towels, he was not happy. He made exciting discoveries in his Greek Testament, he made many life-long friends who definitely

<sup>1</sup>Butler, A First Year in Canterbury Settlement, 143.



belonged to the "best set," he made a small literary reputation by writing for The Press in Canterbury, he made his father happy by writing a book for the guidance of other emigrants, and he made money, but he was not happy. It is a strange fact that the young man who was ready to give up all security and comfort for art in the spring of 1859 was never seen to paint or sketch in New Zealand. Even the drawing of his homestead that appears in the Memoir was done by Jones from a photograph. True, he wrote to his aunt that there was nothing worth drawing in New Zealand, but, as at no time was he deprived of one of his favorite models of later years, the fact that he did not even sketch during the New Zealand period indicates very markedly how deeply hurt he had been by expatriation. Even in Erewhon, the book which certainly grew out of ideas that originated during Butler's years of exile in the Canterbury Settlement, the hero, Higgs,<sup>1</sup> once over the ranges, leaves New Zealand behind and enters a country resembling Butler's beloved Switzerland where the people are not Maoris, of course, but "a splendid type--a compound of all that is best in Egyptian, Greek, and Italian."<sup>2</sup>

It may appear that in these pages I have given a great

<sup>1</sup>Higgs is the name Butler gives his hero in the sequel Erewhon Revisited.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Erewhon, 65.



number of seemingly trivial details from what was a comparatively brief period in Butler's life, but my purpose has been to establish a clear picture of the extremely conventional and rather priggish young man who in these momentous years in New Zealand made the three great discoveries which became the most significant influences in his life. The first discovery, of course, was that the four accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John exhibited sufficiently varied discrepancies in detail concerning the miracle of the Resurrection--the keystone of the Christian faith--as to warrant scepticism; the second was that Charles Darwin was not the originator of the idea of Natural Selection and that he had the unhappy faculty of changing his tune from edition to edition in a most confusing manner; and the third was a friend, Charles Paine Pauli. It would be difficult to determine which of the three discoveries made the greatest impact on Samuel Butler's life: the first changed a very orthodox Christian into a diabolical sceptic; the second changed one of Darwin's most ardent champions into his most militant detractor; and the third turned a rather staid, conventional prig into a very human satirist with a most unconventional approach to the problems that fascinated him. All three discoveries resulted in controversial books: the sceptic wrote The Fair Haven, and, with less skill and an appalling lack of taste, Erewhon Revisited; the detractor wrote a series of books attacking Darwin or his theory; and



the satirist wrote Erewhon and The Way of All Flesh.

In 1897 Butler was somewhat disconcerted to find that in the account of a steeplechase written in a school-fellow's scrap-book he had been dubbed "Backbiter." It is possible that a nickname referring to some physical attribute such as "Beetle-brow," "Gimlet Eye," or even "Old Puny-legs" would not have caused Butler so much chagrin. In selecting a sobriquet for Butler neither mordant Mr. Muggeridge nor the young ladies in Heatherly's art classes who giggled and whispered, "the Incarnate Bachelor!" showed the perspicacity of the shrewd Salopian who unerringly put his finger on the most dominant trait in Butler's character. Backbiter! When Butler was hurt his instant reaction was to seize his brush or pen and counter-attack: the defection of a Cambridge friend stimulated his first ironic essays; the failure of his father and his university to point out the reverse side of the Christian evidences caused him to retaliate by striking at the heartwood of Christian faith with brilliant religious satire; the humiliating defeat he suffered while championing Darwin in a public controversy with the Bishop of Wellington prompted Butler to satirize his hero's theory in "Darwin Among the Machines," the essay that contained the germ of Erewhon and subsequently led to more direct attacks on Darwin in a series of books on evolution; the crippling of his spirit in an English rectory resulted in savage satire, first on canvas in "Family Prayers," and



then in the autobiographical novel The Way of All Flesh; the belief that poor Mr. Heatherly had destroyed his natural flair for art by an insistence on the study of anatomy led to the mockery of narrow academicism in one of Butler's most interesting paintings, "Mr. Heatherly's Holiday," which shows the master repairing a skeleton; the treatment that Miss Savage meted out to him caused him to write in her memory three sonnets which must be among the most shocking examples of insensitivity in the English language; and finally, when Charles Paine Pauli's will revealed the cruel indifference of his dearest friend his heart burned with bitterness and he wrote, with an air of touching innocence, first an account of their life-long intimacy, and then a book on Shakespeare's sonnets which together served to blast the splendid character which Pauli's wealthy friends maintained he possessed. Backbiter--no one realized more poignantly than Butler how accurately young Paget had taken his head-size. The cap did fit.

Of course Butler rationalized the revengeful streak in his nature by seeing himself as a kind of crusader hurling full-tilt against sham, hypocrisy, religious and scientific cant, and slovenly scholarship. He pictured himself as the enfant terrible of literature and science: "If I cannot, and I know I cannot, get the literary and scientific big-wigs to give me a shilling, I can, and I know



I can, heave bricks into the middle of them."<sup>1</sup> More seriously he wrote: "From first to last I have been unorthodox and militant in every book that I have written."<sup>2</sup> His failure during his lifetime to win recognition for any of his serious work embittered him and intensified his inner conflict. Even a moderate amount of success might have done much to remove the vein of personal animosity that runs through nearly every book, but then English literature would have been poorer by two satires.

Mrs. Garnett believed Butler to be "not a little lacking in moral robustness" because of his insidious method of attack: "...he got in his blows sideways, with cunning, with guile; in the guise of courtesy and compliment."<sup>3</sup> A striking example of this 'iron hand in the velvet glove' is found in Butler's preface to Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered in which Butler succeeds in decimating Sidney Lee's reputation for Shakespearian scholarship. He heralds his attack with this gentle thrust:

Still even among hot partisans there are always some with minds more open than others, and when a man begins to open his mind at all, the thin edge of even a poor wedge, and that but clumsily inserted, will sometimes prise it open altogether. I look

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 183.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 262.

<sup>3</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and his Family Relations, 133.



hopefully in this respect to Mr. Sidney Lee, who, as I shall show in some of the following chapters, has opened his mind so repeatedly, and at such short intervals, that he may well open it again.<sup>1</sup>

However, although Mrs. Garnett believed Butler to be lacking in "moral robustness," she would not have agreed with Cole who maintains that "Butler had too little personal bravery for his ideas to shelter behind in comfort."<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Garnett's appreciation of Butler's specific brand of courage was entirely genuine:

...If in his whole age there was anyone who stood up more resolutely against vested interests and powers and potentates and the whole weight of the world's opinion, I do not know his name.<sup>3</sup>

She shrewdly observed that Butler was always reluctant to face "overt unpleasantness" and was convinced that "his fear of anger, and hatred, and violent opposition, and offence, is implicit in almost every sentence he penned."<sup>4</sup> Cole is satisfied that Butler, like all satirists, was hurt when the world hit back, but outraged when it ignored him. Cole's position is very similar in this instance to that of Muggeridge who in his merciless attack upon Butler's character is quick to exploit the revengeful streak in his nature:

Butler wanted to make his father smart, and so ridiculed fatherhood and priesthood; he wanted to

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, preface, xi-xii.

<sup>2</sup> Cole, Samuel Butler, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Garnett, Samuel Butler and his Family Relations, 130.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 132.



make dons and scientists smart, and so ridiculed academicism; he wanted to punish whoever had failed to recognize his wit and understanding, and so continually enlarged the range of his venom.<sup>1</sup>

None of these remarks is strictly fair. Butler's attacks are seldom sidelong as Mrs. Garnett maintained, for even when he resorts to euphemism his intent is abundantly clear as the following excerpt from a page-long 'tribute' to Darwin and Wallace exemplifies:

Neither can be held as the more profound and conscientious thinker; ...neither is the more ready to welcome criticism and to state his opponent's case in the most telling and pointed way in which it can be put; ...neither is the more genial, generous adversary, or has the profounder horror of anything even approaching literary or scientific want of candour.<sup>2</sup>

His assault on a personal foe or on an institution is usually direct enough save in his attack on Pauli,<sup>3</sup> and on the disingenuousness of commentators upon the Christian evidences in The Fair Haven, where the clever veiling of the satire was intended to lure the orthodox into following an argument from which they ordinarily would have fled in horror. The attack in The Fair Haven is certainly not direct, and many were the victims who were lured by the winking harbor-light of the parenthetical note accompanying

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 210.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpt from "The Deadlock in Darwinism," quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 131.

<sup>3</sup>In a later chapter I shall return to the peculiar nature of this attack of which Mrs. Garnett was certainly ignorant at the time when she referred to Butler's sidelong approach to a foe.



the title to follow the pilot, John Pickard Owen, on a flood-tide of theological commentary through the tortuous channels of religious doubt not, alas, to reach the promised anchorage in the calm depths of a confirmed faith, but to be cruelly run aground on the shoals of scepticism so expertly that not a few, including the book reviewers of The Rock and The Scotsman, failed to realize that they had been wrecked. R. A. Streatfeild, in his introduction to the 1913 edition, takes great pains to convince us that Butler never intended to hoax the public, and to prove his point quotes from Butler's letters to Miss Savage. Unfortunately, in his efforts to calm the public, Streatfeild fails to quote from the letter which makes Butler's intent unmistakable. To Miss Savage, while he was engaged in writing the book, Butler commented:

You are now over the stupidest part, and from henceforth the 'mischief becomes worse and worse, till within a few pages of the end. You see I was obliged to feed them a little at first in order to encourage them to swallow the rest.<sup>1</sup>

Cole's charge of lack of bravery is more readily dismissed, as he himself admits that Butler as an author had a "reputation for combativeness, and did not readily run away on paper."<sup>2</sup> As Cole does not elaborate on the statement that Butler had too little personal bravery for his ideas to

<sup>1</sup>Butler to Miss Savage, 1873, quoted in Letters, 34.

<sup>2</sup>Cole, Samuel Butler, 33.



shelter behind one is left wondering to what exactly Cole refers. He may have been thinking of the fact that Butler's letters and articles which appeared in newspapers and magazines were often presented under a pseudonym, and that the pamphlet on the Resurrection, Erewhon, and The Fair Haven, all came from the press anonymously. In the case of Erewhon, Butler had apparently actually considered the feelings of those at Langar, for the following sentences from Canon Butler's letter show that Butler's tact failed to soften the blow:

As for expecting us to feel any vanity or triumph in your success it is wholly impossible. We should heartily rejoice to find it as ephemeral as I am yet disposed to hope and believe it may be. I don't greatly care whether you put your name to the book or not, I quite believe you withheld it for our sakes but the pain is in your having written it, not in its being found out.... It will probably prove an injury to yourself in many ways.<sup>1</sup>

As the letter contains a few more sharp thrusts and concludes with the request that his son refrain from visiting Langar as the meeting would be painful, it is little wonder that the authorship of Erewhon soon became public knowledge. The scheme of The Fair Haven, of course, made anonymity a necessity. Readers had to believe William Bickersteth Owen's prefatory memoir in order to be tempted to follow the hero on his remarkable career.

Muggeridge is so enmeshed in his own malice that he

<sup>1</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel Butler, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 100.



overstresses Butler's venom. To be sure, revenge was undeniably the motivating force for most of Butler's work, but the fact that spite gave the initial stimulus does not mean that the resulting work was mere diatribe. Muggeridge opens the chapter, in which he attacks Butler's books, with a quotation from Miss Savage: "You don't really care for good things--it is your only fault that you don't. It is all hypocrisy your saying that you care."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Muggeridge is here guilty of a nasty piece of literary chicanery, for the excerpt, as given, implies that the lady who had the greatest faith in Butler's intellectual power was accusing him of a lack of appreciation of culture. Actually, Miss Savage is commenting on Butler's indifference to fine food, for she has been reading French cookery books, and Muggeridge's chapter-heading refers to the fact that she would like to send Butler one. Having been warned by this unscrupulous use of quotation at the outset, one is advised to examine Mr. Muggeridge's comment's with care. Before discussing specific books in this chapter, Muggeridge has a few general remarks to make about Butler's ideas:

These ideas of his would long ago have become dust but for the fact that hate enlivened them.... Ideas go bad in a fanatical spirit, like milk in thundery weather. They went bad in Butler, and so thought as such did not satisfy him.... His ideas floundered about helplessly--give them colour, and three or four

<sup>1</sup>Miss Savage to Samuel Butler, Letters, 100, quoted in Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 201.



might be hung in the Royal Academy; give them sound, and lo! Narcissus, an album of songs and gavottes; write them in books, published at his own expense, each one in less demand than the last...<sup>1</sup>

Muggeridge's ideas flounder about helplessly when he discusses Erewhon. He observes that "in Erewhon there is little of the personal bitterness and animosity which spoils Butler's later books."<sup>2</sup> As this is one of the few instances in which his own animosity has allowed him to indulge in a generous remark, it is a pity that his statement cannot be permitted to go unchallenged. Erewhon is the testing ground for many of the ideas that keep recurring throughout Butler's work, and carries as much personal animus as any later book. However, the effect is different as Butler did not limit himself to one or two targets, but lit the fuse to a whole box of fireworks which exploded with a fine shower of sparks that, if they did not scorch, at least singed the fringes of mid-nineteenth century morality, education, justice, culture, religion, and philosophy.

In Erewhon Butler's satire on the relationship between parents and children becomes extremely personal, for when he speaks of a radical group of Erewhonians who insist that the young should be allowed to inflict corporal punishment on their elders, as turn and turn about is only fair, he is

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, ch., VI, 201-203.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 205.



showing how much he had longed to be able to hit back physically at his father. In the book, the blows that Butler directs at his father are intended to make the Canon smart with a greater degree of pain and humiliation than that suffered by the little boy in the rectory at Langar. Butler cleverly devises a two directional assault on his religious upbringing by showing the Erewhonians' bewilderment over Higgs's religious views, and the hero's reaction to the Musical Banks. This assault is, in effect, an attack on the English Church. Surely it is impossible that Muggeridge should believe that when Pauli persuaded Butler to delete the trial of the young Erewhonian charged with having been swindled out of property by one of his nearest relations all significantly personal references to the Canon had been removed. Although it is conceivable that Butler and Pauli, both having an almost holy veneration for money, may have believed that a reference to unscrupulousness in a financial matter would sear the Canon more than an attack on his faith, it is incredible that Muggeridge should be similarly lacking in discernment. That Butler in attacking the English Church is motivated by his resentment of his father is obvious enough in the bitterly personal reference to the fixed determination with which some Erewhonians forced their sons to become cashiers in the



Musical Banks.<sup>1</sup> In view of the multiplicity of references to all that Butler thought was reprehensible in his own youth--all that he attacks by analogy in the "World of the Unborn," the "Birth Formulae," the "hypothetical language," and the "Colleges of Unreason" with their professorships of Inconsistency and Evasion where everyone within a few years suffered from "atrophy of the opinions"--it is difficult to determine how anyone with the discernment of Mr. Muggeridge could entertain, even for a moment, the idea that Erewhon does not abound in examples of Butler's personal bitterness. Even in his most light-hearted moments Butler airs his animosity. As Erewhon was written at a time when Butler was putting almost all his effort into art, a time when an acceptance by the Royal Academy meant much more to him than any possible literary success, the schools of art have not escaped Butler's satirical quill. The most delightful jibe, however, is directed toward the art critics. Gentlemen in Erewhonian gaols when faced with the problem of having to work for a living, although entirely unfitted by their education for useful labor, resort to picking oakum or to writing art criticism for the newspapers.

Muggeridge, carried along on the wave of generosity established by his initial comment on Erewhon's freedom

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Erewhon, 146. Higgs condemns many Erewhonian parents for their "undue influence, concealment, and fraud" in this regard.



from animus, adds: "It is light-hearted and genuinely fanciful. When he wrote it, he had not yet become a moralist."<sup>1</sup> Coming from the pen of an editor of Punch this comment is high praise, for the weapon of the satirist must be the rapier rather than the battle-axe, and Butler, who exhibits the light touch of the master, is so deft in his use of irony that some of his wicked thrusts almost escape detection; but a few pages farther on the critic confuses the reader by observing: "Erewhon is too earnest quite to succeed as satire."<sup>2</sup> Light-heartedness and earnestness are not usually found in double-harness, but an author has the privilege of changing his mind. One is willing to believe that perhaps Muggeridge has detected a hidden earnestness concealed in the guise of light-hearted fancy, but again his floundering ideas change direction and one feels that the critic has been carried out of his depths when he sums up Erewhon as a "burlesque,"<sup>3</sup> a mere vehicle to carry the fads of Samuel Butler. Erewhon, in spite of the light touch and the gnomish naughtiness, can never be taken as a pantomime in which a clown called Butler pirouettes in a land called "Nowhere" pricking the rosy bubbles of

<sup>1</sup> Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 205.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 212.



Victorian complacency.<sup>1</sup>

In Erewhon the Victorians found an author whose ideas had the variety, the sparkle, and the freshness of the incoming tide. Butler attributed the book's short-lived high popularity to the fact that at first people believed the book to have been written by Lord Lytton (even in fancy Butler was attracted to the "best set"), but here Butler was scourging himself with an imaginary whip, for, as Muggeridge points out, Erewhon continued to sell slowly but steadily even after the authorship became known. The almost bubbling spirit of naughtiness that pervades Erewhon appealed to the Victorians who could follow the adventures of the priggish hero, Higgs, and laugh at themselves while doing so. Humor has to be of a high calibre to persuade people to take themselves less than seriously. The essays that Samuel Butler wrote at Cambridge show that he adopted the weapon of satire early in life, but he did not learn to use it lightly and deftly, with what seems to be an almost unconscious ease, until some great influences came into his life. He had been brought up on hell-fire and brimstone. His research into the evidences for the Resurrection led him

<sup>1</sup>Joad writes, "...it was Samuel Butler who first took the portentous lay figure of Victorian complacency by the throat and shook it until the stuffing came out.... He pricked the bubbles, the reputations popped, and the mischievous laughter of the schoolboy was heard in the background." Quoted in Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, Introduction, viii.



to cast a fresh eye on Christianity with the result that the miraculous element ceased to harass his soul. He read Origin of Species and his imagination became fettered in a new set of ideas. His years of "roughing it" in New Zealand, too, were not without effect, for undoubtedly his previous scale of values was upset when he met men who had never been to an English Public School or to Oxford or Cambridge and yet were not fools, and other men who had had a gentleman's education and yet refused to let the experience trammel their spirits. He returned from New Zealand rich enough to defy his father in comfort, and he met two kindred spirits, each of whom saw his possibilities and made much of him.

It is no wonder that Erewhon differs from all Butler's other books, for when he wrote it, the world to him had the lustre of a new-found pearl. Erewhon was written at the only time prior to 1886 when financial worries of one kind or another did not bedevil him. Although The Fair Haven followed closely upon Erewhon, he had by 1872 become concerned about the safety of his money in New Zealand and in recalling the money he felt he was being unfair to his mortgagee. In consequence he suffered a life-long sense of guilt. At the time of Erewhon, moreover, he was free from religious doubts, he was free from the tyranny of his father, he was free to pursue a career in art, he was free to enjoy the encouragement and praise of two fellow-spirits,



more irreverent than himself, who watched the unfolding of his book with the interest of conspirators, and he was free to rid his being of the resentment that seethed within him by attacking, through satire, the forces that he believed had almost managed to warp his spirit.

In The Way of All Flesh Butler refers to the incessant conflict within the schoolboy Ernest. Muggeridge sees a similar conflict in Butler:

This "incessant conflict within" was deep and enduring. It never went. His life was never harmonious. All he was able to do was to impose an outside orderliness, but inside the conflict continued to the end--the conflict in his nature between Theobald and Christina, between mind and flesh, between extravagant self-depreciation and extravagant egotism, between a sense of sin and a conviction that there was no sin.<sup>1</sup>

Furbank in his chapter "Butler and Muggeridge" attacks the author of The Earnest Atheist for implying that Butler was "a sick and unsuccessful personality incapable of writing anything of real value to us in ordering our lives."<sup>2</sup>

Referring to Muggeridge's theme of Butler's destructive inner conflict Furbank states:

In Butler's life we must see, not as Muggeridge would have it, a prolonged, unsuccessful, nagging quarrel between two halves of a discordant nature, but a violent, devastating and comparatively short battle in early manhood, from which he emerged in some ways immensely strengthened, though in others irretrievably scarred, crippled and benumbed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 21.

<sup>2</sup>Furbank, Samuel Butler, 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 9.



Although the views of Muggeridge and Furbank concerning the conflict in Butler differ widely, there is some truth in both. In Erewhon Furbank finds a "controlled savage power" which he attributes to the fact that the book was "the first-fruits of Butler's successful issue from that combat which was the central event of his life..."<sup>1</sup> I heartily agree with Furbank, but the point that apparently escapes him is that Butler's "successful issue" proved to be only temporary, and, therefore, Muggeridge's view of a life-long conflict is correct, although his assessment of the result of that conflict is almost wholly wrong. Commenting on Butler's note, "I had to steal my own birthright. I stole it, and was bitterly punished. But I saved my soul alive," Furbank states:

These sentences from the Notebooks seem to contain the whole matter. Butler's experience was of the nature of a violent and primitive effort for survival.... 'I had to steal my birthright': this is the language of primitive law. It is clear that the rage which enflames the writer in The Way of All Flesh has been satisfied with nothing less than the complete annihilation of the father--or, which is the most of which society permits, of the father's part in him.... The break with the 'Langar' self took for Butler the color of patricide.<sup>2</sup>

Furbank has made a strong point, for there definitely was a 'Langar' self, but, as long as his father continued to live, Butler did not quite succeed in shuffling off its coil.

<sup>1</sup>Furbank, Samuel Butler, 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 17-19.



The intensity of Butler's ill-feeling towards his family is a curious thing, an enigma that has tormented all his biographers. His comments in the Note-Books, in Butleriana, and in his letters to Miss Savage, added to the full-scale portraits of Theobald, Christina, and Charlotte in The Way of All Flesh make a formidable monument to an ever-festered hate. His father's cruelty and tyranny, his mother's falsity, and his sisters' disapproval and petty meannesses collectively hardly account for his obsessive malevolence. The missing element that might explain Butler's exaggerated hostility perhaps has something to do with his brother Tom, for there is a peculiar lack of reference to him in material written by, or about, the Butlers.<sup>1</sup> Tom appears once in a family photograph as a gross-looking hulk of a man dominating even the fair-sized form of the Canon and completely dwarfing Butler; once in Butleriana; twice (apart from casual references in Butler's youthful letters) in the Memoir, but only as a dead man; and not at all in the three published versions of the Note-Books, or in The Way of All Flesh, for Joey is not Butler's brother. Prior to the appearance of Henderson's book, the facts that could be gleaned about Tom were meagre indeed. About all that could be learned was that he liked to roam the countryside and catch trout for the family

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix B.



breakfast; that, although he followed Samuel to Cambridge, he left England earlier than Butler; that later he had a wife, four children, and a house in Wales; that he hated his father; that he disappeared mysteriously under some sort of cloud; and that he died in Corsica leaving a library consisting of three books, a Bible, a book on botany, and an Erewhon.

In view of the pains Butler took in documenting even trivial details in his relationship with his parents and sisters, his reticence about his brother hints at some circumstance in the Langar background so dark and hurtful that not even Butler could bear to bring the truth from out of the shadows. The savagery of a note in Butleriana only adds to the mystery, and augments the feeling that there must have been some abnormally cruel trait in the character of the father to have generated such hatred in both his sons. The note is as follows:

Uncongenial as my father and I were to one another we were cordial friends as compared with my father and my brother. My brother hated my father with a fury which it would not be easy to surpass, and my father's feelings towards my brother were not much removed from this. When I was staying at Shrewsbury a few years since, he said of Tom, 'I don't care about knowing where he is, so long as we hear of his death.'<sup>1</sup>

Henderson, who gives sufficient material from Butler's general correspondence to clear up at least the mystery of

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 28.



Tom's disappearance, notes:

There is a strange parallel between Sam and his bad brother: both had reacted violently against their religious environment and had ruined themselves by their attachment to parasites.<sup>1</sup>

In Tom's case the "parasites" were women, but although his disgraceful conduct in this regard began about 1870 the Canon did not learn of it until his daughter-in-law was at last forced to appeal for help in 1881 when Tom's business in Brussels was on the brink of ruin. However, the grubby, but melodramatic, story does not explain Butler's almost complete avoidance of any reference to his brother throughout his life. The fact that he refers to Tom in one of his letters to Miss Savage as an "impossible person" is only tantalizing, as one naturally wonders what there was about Tom that made him more impossible than Butler's other relations. As Joey in The Way of All Flesh is but an echo of Charlotte, Butler's failure to put some breath of life into Ernest's brother suggests that Joey's prototype had hurt Butler so badly that even literary revenge held no balm. However, no matter how "impossible" was Tom Butler, his brother had two reasons for feeling grateful to him. The first was that in ordering Tom's affairs the Canon had to seek Butler's help and subsequently relented towards Butler to the extent of unexpectedly making his reversion to the Whitehall property absolute, and the other was that

<sup>1</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 79.



of all his family at least Tom had treasured a copy of Erewhon.

In spite of having made shrewd observations regarding Samuel Butler's character, Mrs. Garnett, who also depended heavily on Jones's Memoir,<sup>1</sup> remained earnestly convinced of both Butler's kindness and sincerity:

It is a strange and ironical fate that has overtaken the great ironist, whereby the most sincere-minded man and the greatest hater of shams and insincerities of his day, should be regarded by many as a treacherous double-dealer and life-long mask-wearer, because, while always kind in his heart and his deeds, he allowed his pen licence to be venomous.<sup>2</sup>

In her efforts to recreate the Butlers as a happy family, Mrs. Garnett seems to have confined her research of his works to The Way of All Flesh. Had she made as close a study of some of Butler's other books it is doubtful whether she would have been so generous in her estimate of either his kind-heartedness or his sincerity. Although Mrs. Garnett tried to convince her readers that The Way of All Flesh was not written to show Butler's own view of his relatives, she made much of the point that Streatfeild was the real villain in bringing out the novel, in complete disregard for Butler's wishes, when the sisters were still alive and capable of being grievously hurt.<sup>3</sup> It would be pleasant to grant that

<sup>1</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 188.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>3</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 6.



Butler had enough sensitivity to be concerned about his sisters' feelings, but, unfortunately, Jones would have us believe that one of Butler's main reasons for making Streatfeild his literary executor in preference to himself was that Streatfeild, not having known the sisters, would not hesitate to publish the novel immediately.<sup>1</sup> However, it is possible that Mrs. Garnett was right, and that her charitable view was the correct one, as Jones had acquired so many of Butler's characteristics in their long association that he, too, may have become a backbiter, because there can be no doubt that he was bitterly hurt by Butler's decision that he was not fit, at least physically, to be the literary executor.

Although it is possible that Butler had considered the sense of outrage his sisters would feel and was sincere in his wish that the novel should not be published in their lifetime, the evidence contained in the family correspondence, in the letters to Miss Savage, and in his Note-Books makes it seem highly improbable. In writing of Butler's amazement that his sisters should take deep offence at the portrait of the mother in The Fair Haven, Cole notes:

This was curious insensitiveness in a man whose whole record shows that he was both abnormally sensitive, or even "touchy," in relation to his own affairs and unusually fearful of saying or doing anything that might give offence to those whom he reckoned among

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, Preface, xiv f.



his friends. In relation to his family's feelings Butler had a blind spot.<sup>1</sup>

Butler's vision may have had some defects, but a blind spot here was not one of them for the testimony that he left us proves without a doubt that he was at all times conscious of his family's sensitivity. His actions display much more than a lack of feeling; they are deeds of deliberate malice.

One of Butler's most obvious acts of calculated revenge was to sell his sheep-run, and, with the capital (the greater part of which had actually come from the Canon's pocket to prevent a career in art) invested at ten per cent, to proceed to London to study in the schools of art. That Butler should return to art after having completely abandoned it for five years suggests that he had no burning interest in the subject, for even the excuse of not having enough time, which he offered to his aunt, does not hold, as his pen was extremely busy during the New Zealand years. One feels that had his interest in art been genuine no power on earth could have kept him from sketching in "Mesopotamia." The choice of London rather than Paris or one of the art centres in his beloved Italy, where his money would have had greater value, hints that the Royal Academy was necessary, as a catalogue listing the name of Samuel Butler as an exhibitor would be a very fine piece of mail for his father.

<sup>1</sup>Cole, Samuel Butler, 78.



The following remark in a letter to Miss Savage shows the malevolent glee with which Butler regarded any public notice of his own success that might come under his father's eye:

Thank you for sending the D.T. [Miss Savage had noted a favorable reference to Erewhon.] Any allusion to me in the Daily Telegraph is most important for me, as it is my father's paper and it will make him furious to see this. Any letter or anything which anyone can get into the Daily Telegraph is like talking to my father. I have often thought I ought to try and get to write for the Telegraph.<sup>1</sup>

Paris and Milan were too far from Langar for his purpose.

Butler managed to get pictures in more than one Royal Academy exhibition before Erewhon was published, but the Canon--not unnaturally, considering how he had been tricked into supporting a career of which he thoroughly disapproved--failed to be impressed, and, to the amusement of his son, showed his resentment by continuing to refer to Samuel's work as "drawing."

Nor was Butler's prodigality with the capital advanced by his father limited to a career in art. Ironically--through the assistance to Pauli--two hundred pounds a year were pledged to the support of a profession for which the Canon had every respect, but it is certain that this particular expenditure brought Butler's father only a feeling of grave alarm.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler to Miss Savage, December 3, 1883, Letters, 307.

<sup>2</sup> Vide infra, 194.



As soon as he returned to London Butler took up the quarrel with his father at the point at which it had been interrupted in the spring of 1859: he arranged for the private printing of The Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as Contained in the Four Evangelists Critically Examined. Had this pamphlet created the stir that Butler had anticipated, not even the fear of disinheritance would have kept him from publicly claiming the fruits of his research. But there was no stir. In Erewhon he trained a battery of guns on Langar and, although some of the shells fell short, the smoke of battle at least penetrated the rectory and produced enough smarting to lead to a ban upon his visits. Although the book was not read at Langar the Canon claimed that the shock of its appearance led to the death of Mrs. Butler. Butler maintained that he did not know that his mother was gravely ill, a claim which seems quite credible as he was banned from Langar and his sisters' letters apparently were evasive. However, his suspicions should have been aroused when his father went to the expense of moving his family abroad. Butler's letter of March 12, 1873, drips with hypocrisy, for it is written in the manner of his "Langar" self even to the point of adopting his sister May's style. Whenever his father was ill, his sister's "silence" and use of the word "bright" were always signals to Butler's sensitive eye that something was seriously wrong,



but of course Butler's interest in the ill-health of his father never had to be simulated. Butler could not resist the temptation on this occasion to mock May, and it will be noted that he quotes her favorite adjective:

By your silence I gather that my mother is going on well, and I most heartily trust that I may be right in so conjecturing. No meals but a little light food every hour is really alarming to me, and I shall be very thankful to hear any better account. What is it that the doctors say is the matter with her? I never rightly understand; and do they hold out hopes that she will ere long return to her former state of health? I presume and conclude that they do by your saying that they take a bright view of the case, but so much and such long-continued sickness is most distressing to hear of, and must, I fear, be hardly less wearing to you than to herself.<sup>1</sup>

In this letter Butler, of course, did not spare his sister the details of his own ailment of the moment.

Even after Butler had no doubt at all about the gravity of his mother's illness he continued to write insincerely to May. After urging her to send for him should there be any immediate danger, he makes an observation in which his egotism clothes his hypocrisy:

I could not think of myself as going about my daily affairs and my mother lying perhaps at the point of death, without a sight of the one whom I am very sure that she loves not the least of her children. It would be intolerable to me to think of this, yet I know and deeply regret that my presence could not be without its embarrassments.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler to his sister May, March 12, 1873, quoted in Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 205.

<sup>2</sup> Butler to his sister May, March 24, 1873, quoted in Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 207.



As if this odious piece of false sentimentality were not enough, he proceeds to add a little touch of cruelty to his insincerity:

I suppose you know that The Coming Race--the book which Erewhon was allowed to have equalled, if not more, was by Lord Lytton? I thought my father and mother would be proud of my having met with the approbation of the most intelligent classes of my countrymen, and that not in half measure, but in whole measure. I am sorry I was mistaken. But had I known that my mother's health was failing at the time, I would have kept it back. Whatever else I do, I will do my utmost to do without it reaching the ears of those whom it will pain; but I cannot hold my tongue.<sup>1</sup>

It was a pity that as a letter writer, at least, Butler could not hold his tongue, because Posterity, for whose esteem he earnestly strived, has a habit of comparing the letters written by a famous man. Many biographers quote a significant passage from a letter written to Miss Savage the following day:

My mother is ill--very ill. It is not likely that she will recover--

'I had rather  
It had been my father.'

...They clearly do not want me to come, which is as well, for though in such a case I should travel, yet the less I am on my feet the better--I ought to keep them up. What pains me is that I cannot begin to regain the affection now which Alas! I have long ceased to feel.<sup>2</sup>

Poor Miss Savage fares not much better than May, for

<sup>1</sup>Butler to his sister May, March 24, 1873, quoted in Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 208.

<sup>2</sup>Butler to Miss Savage, March 25, 1873, quoted in Letters, 41.



Butler in the above letter is still not wholly sincere: neither his feet nor the sense of lost affection pains him half so much as the small detail to which the doggerel refers. Muggeridge remarks: "At his mother's deathbed he could be contrite, she having no riches either to ease her way to Heaven, or to bequeath to him."<sup>1</sup> Muggeridge was mistaken, however, about Fanny Butler's riches and therefore missed the full significance of the lines which are not merely another announcement that Butler detests his father, but rather a little note of regret that the money he should now inherit was a mere bagatelle compared to what he might have anticipated had it, indeed, 'been his father.' The letter to Miss Savage makes it quite clear that Butler in his letter to May was not deceiving himself as well as his sister. Mrs. Garnett quotes the letters to May in a chapter entitled "The Actual Family Relations" in the hope that "they will come as a surprise to those who identify Butler's feeling towards his sister with Ernest's attitude to Charlotte."<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Garnett, of course, wrote before the Savage correspondence, Butleriana, and the Keynes version of the Note-Books were published, but the references to Erewhon in the letter of March 24th, should have put her on her guard. Even these, however, she accepted as being "perfectly sincere," and

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 191.

<sup>2</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 198.



merely remarked on Butler's "extraordinary obtuseness."<sup>1</sup> Butler was seldom obtuse, and almost never so in his actual family relations. Had Mrs. Garnett had a little more sensitivity to dates she might have noted that when Butler, referring to the effect of Erewhon, wrote to May <sup>c</sup><sub>A</sub> sanctimoniously: "Whatever else I do, I will do my utmost to do without it reaching the ears of those whom it will pain,"<sup>2</sup> The Fair Haven had already been sitting for two days on the booksellers' shelves waiting like a time-bomb to rock the foundations of Christendom.

Butler was hurt by his father's remark that Erewhon had killed his mother, and it is surprising that we find no comment in Samuel Butler's hand wishing that the book had done as much for his father, for the whole Butler-Savage correspondence is marred by Butler's macabre interest in the ill-health of his father. The jests on the subject that wing back and forth between the two cease to be amusing. In December, 1883, a telegram summoned Butler to Wilderhope, the village near Shrewsbury to which the Canon had retired. After two weeks of falsely raised hopes he wrote to Miss Savage of the tensions which built up in the household as the result of the family's uncertainty about bequests in

<sup>1</sup> Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 209.

<sup>2</sup> Vide supra, 119



the Canon's will:

I have been caged here a fortnight with Charlotte, or rather two Charlottes, and I am sure I must have an angelic temper to have avoided a row. Every time my father has rallied they have flown at me. Every time he has sunk they have toadied. They don't know more than I do. I suppose it will last like this some time yet. My father thinks he is going to recover, he says, 'he has been very poorly'. I take it fairly philosophically, but I don't believe it is good for me--at any rate unless in the end bronchitis proves to be really fatal sometimes.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Garnett read some of the Butler-Savage correspondence in the Memoir, but, as she was spared the more scandalously frank statements such as the one just quoted, she believed Butler's jests to be only in fun, as were Miss Savage's. His conduct gave the lie to his speech, Mrs. Garnett maintained, for his actions were always kind.<sup>2</sup>

When Butler returned to London he wrote the following note which reveals the extreme cruelty of which he was capable when his "most implacable enemy from childhood onward" refused to die:

I then went up to see my father. I found him, as I thought, very feeble. He took my going as he had taken my coming--as a matter of course. I said I was very glad he was so much better and hoped that he would now soon be well. He said with some difficulty, 'Yes, I'm better. Next time you come I hope you will have better weather.' I said, 'I should not have come if Dr. Burd had not sent for me.' He said more quickly, 'Did Dr. Burd send for you?' I said, 'Yes, and now he says I may go.' Then I said good-bye. He said good-bye and I left. I cannot say that I had a very pleasant journey home.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Butler to Miss Savage, December 18, 1883, Letters, 314.

<sup>2</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and His Family Relations, 197.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 31. (The italics are mine.)



It would seem from the intentional cruelty of the remark which I have underlined that Butler's temper during this unsatisfactory visit had more accurately resembled that of a fallen angel, for May had retreated to her bed and Dr. Burd had given him a hint that he "had better go."

At this time Butler had finished revising Volume II of The Way of All Flesh. Miss Savage comments, "You have much improved the second Vol. But as I think you have done the disagreeable characters the best--the first is still the most to my mind..."<sup>1</sup> In view of Butler's mental state, it is not surprising that the disagreeable characters took shape most clearly. The excerpts quoted above show that he did not have to travel all the way to Shrewsbury to find all his models. Butler's parting words failed to cause a relapse and his father continued to tantalize him for another three years. The final gruesome touch to a life-long hatred occurred on December 29th, 1886, when at last the Canon lay dying. In times of stress Butler always turned instinctively to his pen, and he now calmed his feverish anxiety by preparing his father's obituary: "...It requires careful writing, and I must do it before my father dies if I am to get it done at all--some two or three columns."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Miss Savage to Samuel Butler, December 16th, 1883, Letters, 313.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 190.



During the long altercation in the spring of 1859 the exasperated Canon had concluded a letter to Samuel with the fervent wish, "God give you a seeing eye some day!" The Canon's wish was partly gratified when Butler, in editing his correspondence, noted with genuine regret how egotistical and selfish his letters to Miss Savage had been, but there is no evidence that Butler felt a single pang of remorse about his treatment of his family. When Butler's blacksheep brother was asked by a lawyer to send the one hundred pounds he had agreed to contribute to the support of the family he had abandoned, Tom merely replied, "War to the bitter death." Butler in his relations with his father and sisters seems to have adopted a similar resolution, for when he himself at last lay dying he wrote a letter to his sisters outlining the provisions of his will. Jones delicately suggests that Butler, although very weak, wrote the letter himself lest the sisters be upset at receiving a letter concerning their private affairs in Alfred's handwriting.<sup>1</sup> A letter written by Butler's niece gives the definite impression that Butler made the effort to write himself for an entirely different reason:

He is absolutely in bed, and how he was ever able to write a card, far more, a letter, it is hard to understand. I do not think you must worry in the least anymore about anything he said, as Mr. Jones told us he had not been himself at all, and not as bright as

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Samuel Butler, A Memoir, II, 396.



we saw him yesterday.... Best love to the dear Aunts; and please do not feel very sad, because really it was part of the illness, and think of the horror of being told such a thing as that one had a cancer..."<sup>1</sup>

It is a pity that the niece had the same evasive style as her aunt, but there is sufficient evidence to show that Butler's letter did not convey tidings of comfort, and, whatever the contents were, the pain felt by the family was sufficiently severe to make the niece rationalize Butler's cruelty.

It was a queer warfare that was carried on between Butler and his family. There is no doubt that they belittled him deliberately, and that the Canon rejoiced when Butler lost his New Zealand money through speculation and had to come crawling for an allowance once more. There is no doubt that Butler's efforts to maintain pleasant relations at least on the surface were inspired by a constant fear of disinheritance, and not as some biographers would have us believe, by any secret longing for his family's affection. There are some letters written to the sisters in which the "Langar" self was completely dropped. On the surface, the letters seem interesting and gay, but the teasing remained, only expressed in a more Butlerian form. The deviltry is at times so wicked that even Jones was forced to observe, "There was no stopping him from writing such letters when

<sup>1</sup>Garnett, Samuel Butler and his Family Relations, 143.  
(The italics are mine.)



he was in the mood; and he excused himself by saying that his sisters must see they were written in fun. I do not think it likely that his sisters saw anything in them beyond deplorable flippancy and irreverence."<sup>1</sup> In a letter to his sister Butler once wrote, "However it is hopeless my trying to please The Spectator or those who take in The Spectator, and I may as well irritate them as I know I cannot please them."<sup>2</sup> His observation also sums up his relations with his family. Each of the characters in the harlequinade acted behind a mask of insincerity to fool the opposing faction. The gay deceiver Butler gloomily remarks: "I wish I knew whether they think I see through them or no. I do my best to make them think I do not, but I expect they pretty well know."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, II, 37.

<sup>2</sup>Butler to his sister May, April 26, 1892, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 132.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 21.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Butler and Darwin

...[I]f asked to say who was the man of our own times whose work had produced the most important, and, on the whole, beneficial effect, I should perhaps wrongly, but still both instinctively and on reflection, name him to whom I have, unfortunately, found myself in more bitter opposition than to any other in the whole course of my life. I refer, of course, to Mr. Darwin.<sup>1</sup>

One of the factors of Samuel Butler's life of conflict which has fascinated both his admirers and detractors was the vigor and persistence with which he pursued his long warfare with Charles Darwin. Bertrand Russell expresses an interesting view regarding the cause of the conflict, which, although it is most appropriate for the originator of the theory of unconscious memory, certainly differs from the opinions of Butler's biographers:

One might give as an example of the influence of family tradition the reason said to have caused Samuel Butler to invent his doctrine of unconscious memory and to advocate a neo-Lamarckian theory of heredity. The reason was that for family reasons he felt it necessary to disagree with Charles Darwin. His grandfather (it seems) quarrelled with Darwin's grandfather, his father with his father, so he must quarrel with him.<sup>2</sup>

One can detect a slight twinkle in the philosopher's eye, but, although he has mismatched the pairs of disputants, his statement gains considerable support from the fact that

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Luck, or Cunning? (1886), 239.

<sup>2</sup>Russell, Marriage and Morals, 126.



one of Butler's chief regrets for not having had a son was that he should have liked the quarrel to have continued into the fourth generation.

Muggeridge comments on Butler's correspondence with the Bishop of Wellington in The Press in New Zealand in 1863, but dates Butler's initial animosity and suspicion from the publication in 1877 of Life and Habit which was either ignored or dismissed with contempt by the men of science, and implies that Butler's fierce championship of Buffon, Lamarck, and Erasmus Darwin in Evolution, Old and New was inspired not so much by the harmony between their ideas and his own as by his personal sympathy with the way in which they had been either deliberately ignored or contemptuously belittled.<sup>1</sup> Furbank believes that Butler's interest in the history of evolution began from "the merest dispassionate curiosity"<sup>2</sup> and that there was no personal application until he became involved with the attempt to resuscitate the earlier evolutionists. Furbank also accepts Butler's statement that he was surprised by the interpretation placed by some on his early essay "Darwin among the Machines." Mrs. Stillman gives the most comprehensive and most sympathetic account of Butler's quarrel with Darwinism, but she, too, appears to believe Butler genuinely sincere in

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 220-223.

<sup>2</sup>Furbank, Samuel Butler, 16.



the letter to Darwin in which he disclaims any intention of ridiculing the theory of evolution in the Machine chapters in Erewhon:

When I first got hold of the idea, I developed it for mere fun and because it amused me and I thought it would amuse others, but without a particle of serious meaning; but I developed it and introduced it into Erewhon with the intention of implying: "See how easy it is to be plausible, and what absurd propositions can be defended by a little ingenuity and distortion and departure from strictly scientific methods," and I had Butler's Analogy in my head as the book at which it should be aimed, but preferred to conceal my aim for many reasons.... I therefore thought it unnecessary to give any disclaimer of an intention of being disrespectful to The Origin of Species, a book for which I can never be sufficiently grateful, though I am well aware how utterly incapable I am of forming any opinion on a scientific subject which is worth a moment's consideration.

However, you have a position which nothing can shake; and I knew very well that any appearance of ridicule would do your theories no harm whatever, and that they could afford a far more serious satire than anything in Erewhon--the only question was how far I could afford to be misrepresented as disbelieving in things which I believe most firmly.<sup>1</sup>

Commenting on these assurances, Henderson shrewdly observes that perhaps Butler protests a little too much; however, Henderson believes that the relations between Butler and Darwin were at that time still friendly. Henderson, like Jones, Stillman, and Muggeridge, refers to the controversy between Butler and the Bishop of Wellington and even echoes Streatfeild's conjecture that perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Butler to Charles Darwin, May 11, 1872, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 156.



it was the Bishop's article that first directed Butler's attention to the earlier evolutionists, but he, too, fails to remark on any special significance in the dispute. Although it is more than likely that Jones read the whole correspondence carefully, one would not expect him to dwell on a public controversy in which his hero made rash charges that resulted in coals of fire being brought down upon his own head. Mrs. Stillman merely gives a résumé of the facts supplied in the Memoir, but the Bishop's article, at least, receives some attention from Muggeridge and Henderson. However, in the comments of these four biographers there is no suggestion that the Bishop's remarks rudely shook Butler's faith in Darwin as early as 1863.<sup>1</sup>

Although I am unwilling to follow the trail to the source of Butler's quarrel with Darwin quite as far as Bertrand Russell's suggestion would lead us, I am convinced that the basis of Butler's personal bitterness against Darwin long antedated the reception of Life and Habit and his championship of the earlier evolutionists in Evolution, Old and New. In December 1862 Butler's "Darwin on the Origin of Species: a Dialogue" appeared in the Christchurch Press. This essay is remarkable for a number of reasons. It is, of course, noteworthy as Butler's first writing on evolution,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jones, Memoir, I, 100; Stillman, Samuel Butler, 52; Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 89; and Henderson, Samuel Butler, 51.



but it is also interesting because it appears to have a definite link with Butler's departure from orthodoxy.

Cole observes:

...Butler was to feel as sharply as any man the impact of the new wave of religious doubt that Darwin's book set in motion.... It was not, however, because of Darwin that he reacted against ordination and resisted his father's pressure that he should allow himself to be made a clergyman without feeling the call. Butler's reaction against Christian orthodoxy came for the most part later than his repudiation of the notion of becoming a parson. Nor was his attack upon orthodoxy ever mainly based on Darwinism, though of course he was influenced by it.<sup>1</sup>

Cole also points out that although Erewhon and The Way of All Flesh both show the influence of Darwin's theory, The Fair Haven could have been written had Origin of Species never appeared. Butler's investigations in Heddon Street into the efficacy of infant baptism and his examination of the discrepancies in the four accounts of the Resurrection in the Greek Testament had indeed undermined his faith in the miraculous elements of Christianity, but the "Dialogue" shows that the wave of which Cole speaks was undoubtedly instrumental in washing away the old grounds of religious belief that had become unstable under Butler, and in sweeping him into an entirely new field where he saw delightful prospects for his imagination and spirit of intellectual enquiry, free forever, he no doubt thought, from the fetters of superstition, dogma, tradition, and authority.

<sup>1</sup>Cole, Samuel Butler, 24-25.



I have already suggested the distaste with which Butler viewed the lonely life of the pioneer. Intellectual pioneering was to bring him an even greater feeling of unease. It was one thing to seek arguments with which to confound his father; it was quite another to have accumulated enough evidence to shake the foundations of the faith in which he had been reared. It is evident that Butler must have been appalled by the conclusions that were forced upon him from his examination of the Greek Testament. He must have seen that his scepticism would impose a greater loneliness upon him than that effected by the merely physical isolation of his homestead where he had made his faith-shattering discoveries. Butler notes in his introduction to Unconscious Memory that he read Origin of Species for the first time in 1860 or 1861, and later, according to Mrs. Stillman, he told some of the students at Heatherly's art school that Darwin's book had entirely destroyed his belief in a personal God.<sup>1</sup> Darwin's Origin of Species was a much severer blow at Christian orthodoxy than had been Butler's own researches into the Greek Testament, but in Darwin's work Butler found one reassurance: he found an escape from the horror of intellectual loneliness.

In August, 1862, Butler had written in a letter:

Hoare gave me rather a sharp wigging for a letter I wrote him not long since--just a few days before I

<sup>1</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 62.



came to see that the death of Jesus Christ was not real. He says I swore at the Articles.... I feel strongly and write as I feel; but I am open to conviction, and that I can take in more sides of a question than one is proved by the many changes my opinions have undergone.

For the present I renounce Christianity altogether.<sup>1</sup>

But four months later in the "Dialogue" he answered the second speaker, who found the theory of evolution "very horrid" and "utterly subversive of Christianity," thus:

"I believe in Christianity and I believe in Darwin."<sup>2</sup> These two excerpts show the conflict Butler was experiencing in 1862 when the lacerations suffered in having stripped off his old belief were still sufficiently painful to cause him, at least publicly, to grasp at the protection of the old faith while embracing the new.

The "Dialogue" is also remarkable in that it fell into the hands of Charles Darwin who was so impressed by its "clear and accurate view" of his theory that he tried to persuade the editor of an English paper to reprint it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Butler, in a letter dated August 14th, 1862, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 98.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, "Darwin on the Origin of Species: A Dialogue," A First Year, 193.

<sup>3</sup>Henderson says: "In March, 1863 Darwin himself wrote to the Press, praising Butler's dialogue for the clear and accurate view it gave of his theory of evolution" (Samuel Butler, 51), but on the strength of his past performance I would say that Henderson misread again.



Jones and Streatfeild unearthed this interesting piece of information in 1912 when they found Darwin's letter to the editor listed for sale in a dealer's catalogue. Jones dated Darwin's letter as March 24, 1863, but he refrains from indulging in any speculations as to how Butler's article came so speedily to Darwin's attention. As Butler later sent copies of his pamphlet on the Resurrection, Erewhon, and The Fair Haven to Darwin, and two copies of Life and Habit to Francis Darwin (one of which was intended for his father) almost the moment they were published, it seems more than likely that it was also Butler who promptly dispatched a copy of The Press to Down. I believe that he sent the paper anonymously, as Darwin in his letter to the editor would scarcely have referred to the author of the "Dialogue" as "someone quite unknown to Mr. Darwin" had he been aware that the article was written by the son of his old school friend and the grandson of his own headmaster. By refusing to be ordained Butler had cut himself off from the sympathies of Langar, and the pamphlet he was preparing on the evidences of the Resurrection would utterly discredit him in his father's eyes; therefore it was only natural that he should seek the approbation of Charles Darwin who possessed three unique qualities which were especially attractive to Butler: Darwin had also quarrelled with the



Reverend Thomas Butler; Darwin had also indirectly, but none the less destructively, attacked Christianity; and Darwin had power.

On January 17, 1863 a reply to Butler's "Dialogue" appeared in The Press. This article was written, as Butler later learned, by the Bishop of Wellington, but it is doubtful that Butler at first knew his opponent's identity; if he had he would scarcely have adopted such scathing severity in the subsequent controversy. Even as late as October, 1865, he urged Darwin not to mention the Bishop's name. The Bishop's article was entitled "Barrel-Organs" and commented on the limitations of human invention in that certain ideas kept reappearing in regular succession through the ages. Of the Darwinian theory the Bishop wrote: "This is nothing new, but a réchauffée of the old story that his namesake, Dr. Darwin, served up in the end of the last century to Priestley and his admirers, and Lord Monboddo had cooked in the beginning of the same century."<sup>1</sup> The Bishop also made merry with one of Darwin's statements about a bear swimming about in the water catching flies.

In his reply, Butler characteristically assumed yet another pseudonym and effected a double-barrelled counter attack by criticizing both the Bishop's article and his own.

<sup>1</sup>"Barrel-Organs," an unsigned article in The Press, January 17, 1863, quoted in Butler, A First Year, 195-197.



With the author of the "Dialogue" he was quite stern, finding him to be "deficient in scientific caution" and "little versed in habits of literary composition and philosophical argument" but yet showing the merit of having written in earnest. After dealing with himself in this vein at some length, but not forgetting to refer to "Darwin's obvious truths," Butler turned to deal with the author of "Barrel-Organs" with much greater severity. He attacked the article point by point, rashly asking when he came to Erasmus Darwin: "...will the writer of the article refer to anything bearing on natural selection in Dr. Darwin's work?" The Bishop's remark about the bear roused him to impassioned heights: he accused the writer of "a carelessness hardly to be reprehended in sufficiently strong terms" and scandalous misrepresentation, and begged for a "reference to the place in which Darwin is guilty of the nonsense that is fathered upon him..."<sup>1</sup>

The Bishop answered promptly with a quotation from the older Darwin's work to prove that therein lay the germ of his grandson's theory, but said nothing about the bear. Butler acknowledged the Bishop's superior knowledge of the work of Dr. Darwin and thanked his opponent for correcting his carelessness. Humbly enough he granted:

<sup>1</sup>Butler, in a letter to the editor of The Press, February 21, 1863, quoted in Butler, A First Year, 198-201.



Let, then, the 'Savoyard's' assertion that Dr. Darwin had to a certain extent forestalled Mr. C. Darwin stand, and let my implied denial that in the older Darwin's works passages bearing on natural selection, or the struggle for existence, could be found, go for nought, or rather let it be set down against me.<sup>1</sup>

However, he stoutly continued to maintain that Charles Darwin was the true propounder of the theory and that his grandfather had not carried the idea beyond speculation. Also, having thoroughly searched his copy of Origin of Species, he rashly concluded:

It would be mere presumption on my part either to attack or defend Darwin, but my indignation was roused at seeing him misrepresented and treated disdainfully. I would wish, too, that the 'Savoyard' would have condescended to notice that little matter of the bear.<sup>2</sup>

The Bishop answered by quoting Butler's blistering references to his "disgraceful carelessness," and, with a passage from his earlier edition of Origin of Species, proved Darwin's paternity of the "nonsense about the bear." Thus, at the cost of a very painful and most horribly public lesson,<sup>3</sup> Butler learned two facts about his hero: one, that his theory could claim descent with modification from the work of his grandfather, and two, that Darwin's own work could show disconcerting modification from one edition to

<sup>1</sup> Butler, in a letter printed in The Press, March 18, 1863, quoted in Butler, A First Year, 203.

<sup>2</sup> Loc cit.

<sup>3</sup> Although the letters bore only pseudonyms, the identity of each writer would undoubtedly, in a new community, be known by many.



another. These two points were to be the basis of Butler's direct attacks on Darwin many years later.

No biographer has linked Butler's satire "Darwin among the Machines" with the scathing rebuke he received from the Bishop of Wellington. Indeed, no biographer has even noted that Butler emerged from the controversy the discredited disputant. In the last chapter I offered various examples of Butler's immediate reaction to hit back when hurt. There can be no doubt that a sensitive spirit like Butler's would little relish the ridicule that his rashness had called down upon his own head. Darwin had caused him to be made a laughing-stock; very well, the back-biter would ridicule Darwin's theory, and "Darwin among the Machines" duly appeared in The Press on June 13, 1863.

Commenting on Butler's early attitude towards Darwin, Mrs. Stillman writes: "One of the most interesting things about Butler's reaction to Darwinism is the fact that he was already criticizing it subconsciously before he had any conscious quarrel with it."<sup>1</sup> True enough, in 1863 Butler had no conscious quarrel with the theory, but he had some slight reason to feel malice towards Charles Darwin. "Darwin among the Machines" was followed by "Lucubratia Ebria" which took the view that machines were new external modifications in the race of man. Mrs. Stillman

<sup>1</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, 115.



continues:

In these early writings the opposing views presented in the Machine chapters are clearly stated, and in each is implicit, from a widely different angle, a criticism of the Darwinian view of evolution, whose full force Butler himself did not grasp, and could not until he had turned it inside out once more and it had developed into the basic theory of Life and Habit.<sup>1</sup>

But, in 1902, a few months before he died, Butler wrote a letter in which he granted to Charles Darwin the perspicacity that Mrs. Stillman denies himself:

With Erewhon Charles Darwin smelt danger from afar. I knew him personally; he was one of my grandfather's pupils. He knew very well that the machine chapters in Erewhon would not end there, and the Darwin circle <sup>2</sup> was then the most important literary power in England.

Apart from camouflaging the reference to Butler's Analogy, Butler incorporated almost verbatim his remarks to Darwin in his letter of May 11, 1872<sup>3</sup> into the preface to the second edition of Erewhon. Butler in later years looked upon this preface without pride and remarked in his preface to the revised edition in 1901: "an inexperienced writer with a head somewhat turned by unexpected success is not to be trusted with a preface."<sup>4</sup> But it is doubtful

<sup>1</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, 115.

<sup>2</sup> Butler to O. T. F. Alpers, February 17, 1902, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 382.

<sup>3</sup> Vide supra, 129

<sup>4</sup> Butler, Erewhon, preface to the revised edition of 1901, xi.



whether Butler's sincerity in his prefatory remarks is ever to be trusted. In his preface to the second edition of The Fair Haven, for example, his sly tongue-in-cheek is obvious in this small lump of sin:

My previous work, Erewhon, had failed to give satisfaction to certain ultra-orthodox Christians, who imagined they could detect an analogy between the English Church and the Erewhonian Musical Banks. It is inconceivable how they could have got hold of this idea...<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, there can be little doubt, in spite of Butler's protestations to Charles Darwin to the contrary, that in "Darwin among the Machines" he did intend raising a ripple of laughter to divert ridicule from himself to Darwin, and that by the time he wrote Erewhon he was in serious pursuit of the theory with which he ultimately challenged the Darwinists in 1877.<sup>2</sup>

It is doubtful, however, that Darwin saw the danger of which Butler was thinking, as the ideas in the Machine chapters were a long way, both in time and development, from those in Life and Habit, but Darwin may have seen the

<sup>1</sup> Butler, The Fair Haven, preface to the second edition, 1873, xvi.

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1865 Butler seems to have been writing on evolution with more than an intention to cause amusement, for of "Lucubratio Ebria" he wrote: "There is hardly a sentence in it written without deliberation..." See a letter of 1865 quoted by Jones in an introductory note in The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 41-42. See also Butler's letter to O. T. F. Alpers, which I have quoted in part on page 139.



danger which Furbank has detected:

In Darwin among the Machines he had found the proper way to make things awkward for the Darwinians. Attack the theory from the outside and it can defend itself without much discomfort; but go inside the theory, follow up its suggestions to their logical conclusion, make amendments to the theory so as to give it a dubious sort of compatibility with religion, and the defenders of the theory are irretrievably committed to what they most wished to avoid, a discussion upon theological ground.<sup>1</sup>

Furbank believes that in Origin of Species Darwin was deliberately trying to disturb the orthodox as little as possible in order to avoid any embroilment in conflict with religious opinion, and that to mitigate the shock of the implications of his theory on the religious reader he resorted to the occasional use of a pious epithet.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, then, Furbank believes that the Darwin group was likely to view Butler's writings with some alarm.

It would seem that in these observations Furbank has perhaps unwittingly also cast some light upon an old mystery--the reason for the brief duration of Butler's friendship with Charles Darwin--and thus has made it possible to trace one of the more perplexing threads in Butler's life of conflict much more readily. It has already been noted that Charles Darwin was sufficiently impressed by the

<sup>1</sup> Furbank, Samuel Butler, 61.

<sup>2</sup> Furbank, Samuel Butler, 60.



vigor and clarity of Butler's style to have tried to bring the "Dialogue" to the attention of a wider circle of readers. And it is not likely that Darwin made the effort merely because the article dealt with his own book, for it seems that Darwin was truly appreciative of Butler's talent, and that his observant eye noted very early the specific strengths of Butler's style and his uniquely ambient approach to a problem. It is, however, a pity that Butler remained in ignorance of the fact that Charles Darwin had made an effort to interest an English editor in his writing, for knowledge of that act of kindness might have done much to mitigate Butler's later bitterness. It seems obvious enough that Butler, having cut himself off from any hope of sympathy in the environment that had produced him, needed the moral support of someone like Darwin and therefore sent his pamphlet on the Resurrection to the one person who was not likely to be shocked by its revelations, and the one person whose position was sufficiently assured to allow him to sponsor a young writer with a taste for perilous polemics. Darwin, however, answered in a very restrained fashion, briefly noting that he had read the paper with interest and that he had particularly agreed with the prefatory remarks (in view of Butler's other prefaces one wonders if, in this case, they were sincere), and made a polite inquiry as to whether Butler planned to return to New Zealand



and if it were his intention to write.

Darwin's letter must have been somewhat chilling to the hopes of a young man who thought that he had shed brilliant light upon a subject that had remained in shadow for almost two thousand years, but, nothing daunted, he seized upon the excuse of Darwin's polite inquiry regarding his future plans and dispatched a fairly detailed account of his recent life and of his plans for a career in art. He urged Darwin not to fatigue himself answering his letter, but he enclosed a clipping from The Press. Darwin, perhaps reassured by Butler's plans for becoming an artist, answered more genially, for Butler's double-headed reply to the Bishop of Wellington in defence of Darwin had amused him. He now suggested that Butler might employ his fine powers in writing a book about the life of a New Zealand colonist, a suggestion which is interesting in that, besides showing that Darwin wished to turn Butler's attention to safer topics, it also indicates that Canon Butler had not seen fit to forward his old school friend a copy of A First Year in Canterbury Settlement.

Butler made a note on this letter of Darwin's to the effect that he had forgotten what his printed letter was all about beyond that he had answered the Bishop's attack in the guise of a third person, a scheme which enabled him



to attack himself also and thus maintain the deception. Butler dismisses the incident with the comment: "But it was all very young and silly together." This note is even more interesting than Darwin's letter as, if we are to accept at face value the notes which Butler made when editing his correspondence in 1901, it reveals that Butler possessed the happy faculty of ridding his conscious memory of unpleasant incidents with a greater ease than is enjoyed by most.

A study of Butler's correspondence indicates that his lapses of memory are remarkable in that they often occur with what must have been distressing, and one would assume memorable, events in his life. For example, once when having quarrelled so bitterly with his father that he could not bring himself to write and make some amends he was forced to ask T. M. How to intercede for him, and yet he refers to the incident in Butleriana in this manner:

With that I left the house, but not seeing any reason why I should break with my father entirely I either wrote or called again, I forget which, to soften the effect of what I had said.<sup>1</sup>

It is odd that he should have forgotten that the "softening" had to be done by another. Again, when he offended Miss Savage by observing that he felt that she no longer wrote to him with her former care and she answered with her famous

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 66.



"With Care! This Side Up!" letter chiding him for the weakness of his memory in connection with what was a "very unpleasant moment" in her existence, he notes that he must have pained her in some way but that he had no recollection of the incident to which she referred.<sup>1</sup> However, in the case of the note referring to his dispute with the Bishop of Wellington his forgetfulness seems to be quite genuine, for the evidence shows that in later life Butler was extremely vague about the early progress of his interest in Darwinism. He was, for example, under the impression that "Lucubratio Ebria" (which gave the view that machines were extra-corporeal limbs) appeared in The Press within "a few days or a few weeks" of the publication of his first machine article in 1863. Actually, the second essay was written in England and was not printed in The Press until 1865. Too, the Bishop's letters contained references to the significant contributions made to the theory of evolution by Dr. Darwin and Buffon, information which Butler acknowledged, yet the facts seem to have dropped from his conscious memory, for, in telling in Unconscious Memory of how he came to write Evolution, Old and New, he writes as if the ideas were entirely new to him in 1878:

First, I read all the parts of the "Zoonomia" that were not purely medical, and was astonished to find that, as Dr. Krause has since said in his essay on

<sup>1</sup>A note attached by Butler to Miss Savage's letter of September 15, 1877, Letters, 156.



Erasmus Darwin, "he was the first who proposed and persistently carried out a well-rounded theory with regard to the development of the living world."<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that Butler simply dismissed the controversy with the Bishop from his mind, but it seems very unlikely that he ever, even for a short time, forgot his early articles on the machines, and, as it has already been noted,<sup>2</sup> he was perhaps groping towards a theory as early as 1865. Mrs. Stillman appears to be somewhat puzzled by the mystification created by the preface to the second edition of Erewhon, for she observes:

But is it possible that at this time [1872] he was actually in such complete ignorance of the drift of his own thought as his characterization of his own work [in the preface to the second edition of Erewhon] suggests? If so, "how strange the irony that hides us from ourselves," as he was later to say with reference to Lamarck, since within those very chapters lay the germ of everything he was within a few years to maintain in stubbornest opposition to the Darwinian view of evolution.<sup>3</sup>

Actually, the "germ" to which Mrs. Stillman refers can be detected even more readily and much earlier in the letters and articles in The Press; and, moreover, the Bishop's article contained what may have been the germ of an idea adopted much later by Butler--the theory of vibrations--for the Bishop quoted Hallam's statement of Bruno's theory

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Unconscious Memory, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Vide ante, 140. (Footnote 2.)

<sup>3</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, 119.



regarding the development of species: "There is nothing so small or so unimportant but that a portion of spirit dwells in it; and this spiritual substance requires a proper subject to become a plant or animal."<sup>1</sup> Butler at first only adopted the theory of vibrations to explain the physics of memory, but his later position appears to bear a close relationship to Bruno's: "Our conception, then, concerning the nature of any matter depends solely upon its kind and degree of unrest, that is to say, on the characteristics of the vibrations that are going on within it."<sup>2</sup> It would seem, therefore, that the controversy with the Bishop of Wellington in 1863 influenced the trend of Butler's later writings on evolution much more than has been admitted.

Erewhon came out at the end of March, 1872, but Butler did not immediately send a copy to Darwin. On May 11th he wrote the letter mentioned earlier in this chapter <sup>3</sup> which disclaimed all intention of ridiculing Darwin, and shortly afterwards he was invited to spend a weekend at Down. Amicable relations having been satisfactorily established, he hastened to send Darwin a copy of the second edition in June. In November Butler was again invited to stay at Down

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, quoted in "Barrel-Organ" printed in The Press, Christchurch, 1863, quoted in Butler, A First Year, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Luck or Cunning? 261.

<sup>3</sup> Vide ante, 129.



and apparently took with him the manuscript of the "Memoir" which precedes The Fair Haven, for Charles Darwin read portions to his sons. Butler, according to Jones, thought that he had been coldly received but that Darwin warmed to him again after the reading. In any event, it proved to be his last visit.

In April 1873, however, Darwin read The Fair Haven and wrote to thank Butler for sending it. In his letter Darwin admitted that, had he not known the identity of the author, he would have been quite deceived, and wondered whether the orthodox would be able to detect the heresy. He admired the strength with which Butler presented the view that Jesus did not die on the cross, but was not sure that he was convinced. He did not find the book light reading, and again did his best to turn Butler's talents towards less hazardous pursuits: "What has struck me much in your book is your dramatic power--that is to [say] the way in which you earnestly and thoroughly assume the character and think the thoughts of the man you pretend to be."<sup>1</sup> Evidently Darwin did not realize how closely Butler was identified with his hero John Pickard Owen. Darwin showed the book to one or two, but not, Jones assures us with an irony worthy of his teacher, to Huxley who many years later wrote

<sup>1</sup>Darwin to Butler, April 1, 1873, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 187.



"Agnosticism: a Rejoinder" in which he presented arguments very similar to those of Butler.

In thanking Darwin for his letter about The Fair Haven Butler remarked: "Of course, all I really want is to force on the fight and help towards compelling an attitude of fixed attention in the place of cowardly shrinking from examination."<sup>1</sup> If Furbank's view is correct, involvement in religious controversy was just what Darwin very much wished to avoid, and therefore it is not surprising that, after having picked Butler up during his brief period of lionhood following the publication of Erewhon, he promptly dropped him when he found that the young man was determined to upset the ecclesiastical bee-hive. Furbank, I believe, has given us an excellent clue to the reason why the Darwin-Butler friendship was stillborn.

Undoubtedly, Butler was bitterly disappointed that both his pamphlet and The Fair Haven failed to create more than a passing squall, and it seems that his disappointment gave rise to a feeling of resentment against Charles Darwin for having neglected to aid him in stirring up a storm of lasting proportions. And this feeling of resentment can readily be detected in Butler's first book on evolution. I have already mentioned that Muggeridge dates Butler's

<sup>1</sup> Butler to Darwin, April 15, 1873, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 189.



animosity towards Darwin from the reception of Life and Habit, but he confutes his own contention by quoting passages from the book which show that Butler had already trained his sights on Darwin and his circle:

Others say that...the coming religion is science. Certainly its apostles preach it without misgiving, but it is not on that account less possible that it may prove only to be the coming superstition--like Christianity, true to its true votaries, and, like Christianity, false to those who follow it introspectively. It may well be that we shall find we have escaped from one set of taskmasters to fall into the hands of others far more ruthless. The tyranny of the Church is light in comparison with that which future generations may have to undergo at the hands of the doctrinaires.<sup>1</sup>

Muggeridge quotes more fully and goes on to the pages in which Butler describes the man of science as the medicine-man, augur, or priest in his latest development, but I think the above excerpt is enough to show that before the rejection of his scientific books Butler's feeling for Darwin was anything but cordial.

The essence of Life and Habit is contained in this remarkable passage:

It is one against legion when a creature tries to differ from his own past selves. He must yield or die if he wants to differ widely, so as to lack natural instincts, such as hunger or thirst, or not to gratify them. It is more righteous in a man that he should "eat strange food," and that his cheek should "so much as lank not," than that he should starve if the strange food be at his command. His

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Life and Habit, 40, quoted in Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 221.



past selves are living in him at this moment with the accumulated life of centuries. "Do this, this, this, which we too have done, and found our profit in it," cry the souls of his forefathers within him. Faint are the far ones, coming and going as the sound of bells wafted on to a high mountain; loud and clear are the near ones, urgent as an alarm of fire.<sup>1</sup>

At the time he wrote these words on Mount Royal in 1874 Butler did not realize that his idea of continued personality in successive generations was going to lead him into a full-scale attack on Darwin. Early in 1876 he wrote the tentative outline of his theory to a friend, T. W. G. Butler, and by August he had not only developed his ideas of continued personality, inherited habit, and his view on memory and its function very fully, but had attacked his theory from every possible angle and found it sound. With considerable excitement he wrote to Miss Savage:

The theory frightens me--it is so far reaching and subversive--it oppresses me, and I take panics that there cannot really be any solid truth in it; but I have been putting down everything that it seems to me can be urged against it, with as much force as if I were a hostile reviewer, and I really cannot see that I have a leg to stand upon when I pose as an objector.<sup>2</sup>

His excitement continued to rise during 1877 as his book slowly took form, for he was confident that it would succeed as he believed he had developed an entirely new idea.

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Life and Habit, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Butler to Miss Savage, August, 1876, Letters, 136.



Butler's financial worries at that time were acute and the possibility of producing a really successful book apparently had such a forceful effect on his emotions that he was for a long period actually physically short of breath. When his book was almost complete and already in the press, Butler's agitation was greatly increased because he was compelled by a friend to read Mivart's Genesis of Species which brought him to an abrupt halt, for he was shocked to find arguments that were completely new to him and which he was incapable of answering. Anxiously he turned to Darwin to find out how Mivart had been answered in Origin of Species. Butler failed to find satisfaction in Darwin's answers, but in searching for them his eye fell with horror on this sentence that dashed all his high hopes: "I am surprised that no one has hitherto advanced this demonstrative case of neuter insects against the well-known doctrine of inherited habit as advanced by Lamarck."<sup>1</sup> Butler was astounded because he had never heard of any doctrine of inherited habit of Lamarck's: his edition of Darwin had simply referred to the "well-known doctrine of Lamarck."<sup>2</sup> Butler had believed that the theory was to reach the public for the first time in the pages of his

<sup>1</sup> Darwin, Origin of Species, quoted in Butler, Unconscious Memory, 23.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C for the way in which Butler dealt with the "case of the neuter insects" in defending Lamarck's doctrine.



own book. Expecting to find that he had been developing a theory which had already been postulated and refuted, Butler turned in trepidation to Lamarck and saw, to his great relief, "how incoherent and unworkable in practice the later view [Mr. Darwin's] was in comparison with the earlier."<sup>1</sup> At that point Darwin's view of Natural Selection as an explanation of the origin of species became for Butler "a rope of sand."<sup>2</sup>

Butler ceased to uphold the Darwinian theory of evolution and eagerly applied himself to the task of revitalizing an interest in Lamarck's theory which he believed to be now strengthened by his own theories of memory and continued personality between successive generations. The realization that Lamarck had already developed a theory of inherited habit was, of course, a severe blow to Butler, but, characteristically, he did not abandon his book; rather he lent his remaining theories to the support of Lamarck's. He then found it necessary to revise the earlier chapters of Life and Habit to make them consistent with a teleological view of evolution, and the last five chapters of closely reasoned argument became a negation of the Darwinian theory.

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Unconscious Memory, 24.

<sup>2</sup>Butler to Francis Darwin, November 25, 1877, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 259.



A second blow had threatened Butler, however, and this was one he could not face: Francis Darwin, one day at lunch in Clifford's Inn, remarked that a letter in Nature by Professor Lankester had given excerpts from a German article on memory which apparently presented similar ideas to those which Butler was developing in Life and Habit. Butler was afraid to look up the letter lest the views to which it referred do serious damage to his own when that part of his book dealing with memory was on the point of going to press. He therefore waited until Life and Habit had appeared, and then--as he explains in a note added to a letter from Francis Darwin--"when Life and Habit had been published 5 or 6 weeks I looked it up, and at once called attention to it in The Athenaeum."<sup>1</sup> Whatever it says for Butler's scholarship, his belated action shows a desire to appear to be most gentlemanly, but, however, a remark in a letter to Miss Savage reveals the devilish schemer of Clifford's Inn:

There will be a little letter from me in The Athenaeum on Friday, enclosing two extracts from earlier geniuses [Erasmus Darwin and Professor Hering] who have said some of my things before me, and with whom I wish to be the first to make possible future reviewers acquainted--besides it was a <sup>2</sup>stunt for advertising the books, so I sent them.

<sup>1</sup>A note by Butler, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 257.

<sup>2</sup>Butler to Miss Savage, February 7, 1878, Letters, 174.



It is no wonder that Butler felt that his book needed a push as there were no reviews in December and those that began to appear at the end of January were mostly contemptuous. Professor Hartog in his introduction to Unconscious Memory observes that Butler antagonized the very group to which his work should have made most appeal. Under the circumstances, the hostility of the reviewers was hardly surprising.

Although after 1872 Butler had never been invited again to Down, a friendship had developed between him and Francis Darwin. A letter which Butler wrote to young Darwin announcing that he was sending two copies of Life and Habit has the merit of sincerity: "I confess that I do not like the thought either of his seeing it, or of your doing so; for it has resolved itself into a downright attack upon your father's view of evolution, and a defence of what I conceive to be Lamarck's."<sup>1</sup> In this letter which gave a full account of what Francis Darwin termed "the evolution of Life and Habit," Butler remarks on the severity of the attack, "I wrote about your father's book exactly as I should have done about any one else's, bearing in mind his immense services and his age as compared with my own."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler to Francis Darwin, November 25, 1877, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 257.

<sup>2</sup> Butler to Francis Darwin, November 25, 1877, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 259.



But, in spite of this seemingly respectful attitude, he rather impishly notes a jibe made at Darwin's style:

In one passage only have I been disrespectful-- that is when I say that "domestic productions" may mean anything from a baby to an apple dumpling; but I could not resist, and can only say that it was not I that did it, but sin that was working in me.<sup>1</sup>

The combination of haste, sin, and perhaps at times his unconscious memory produced results that offended some and perplexed many. Butler consistently called Darwin's Variations of Animals and Plants under Domestication "Plants and Animals," and often referred to Origin of Species as "Natural Selection."<sup>2</sup> These irritating inaccuracies or unconscious slights could not but disturb his readers. Even Francis Darwin, when he wrote to say that he had read Life and Habit with great pleasure, revealed in a brief postscript his perplexity and annoyance.

In writing about Life and Habit before it was published, Francis Darwin had remarked that he expected Butler's book to differ from Mivart and Lamarck at least in "having some fun in it,"<sup>3</sup> and, indeed, the book had so much fun in it that Butler's readers were undoubtedly a little uneasy.

<sup>1</sup>Butler to Francis Darwin, November 25, 1877, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 259.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Streatfeild's preface to Life and Habit, x, and Butler, Luck, or Cunning? 83.

<sup>3</sup>Francis Darwin to Butler, 1877, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 260.



Butler's adapting a slightly improper pantomime song <sup>1</sup> for use in a philosophic work, for example, was just the sort of thing that would arouse suspicion among the scientists that they were perhaps being made the butt of another Fair Haven. Too, in the chapter on "Conscious and Unconscious Knowers" Butler pushed over a number of Victorian idols in such an irreverent manner that his publisher pleaded with him to delete at least the passage which describes Goethe in the role of unconscious humorist in Wilhelm Meister. Such levity was not reassuring, nor were certain of his analogies, such as the following likely to induce respect for his sincerity:

The action...of an embryo making its way up in the world from a simple cell to a baby, developing for itself eyes, ears, hands, and feet while yet unborn, proves to be exactly of one and the same kind as that of a man of fifty who goes into the City and tells his broker to buy him so many Great Northern A shares--that is to say, an effort of the will exercised in due course on a balance of considerations as to the immediate expediency, and guided by past experience...<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In a note Butler implies that Francis Darwin was mildly shocked when he obliged him with the correct reading of the stanza in Life and Habit which begins, "Some breeds do and some breeds don't." Jones, however, doubts that Butler had given young Darwin his favorite variation which ran:

Some girls do, and some girls don't,  
Some girls will, but this girl won't;  
I tried very often to see if she would,  
But she said she was--living with mother now.  
(Memoir, I, 270.)

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Life and Habit, 74.



Even when attacking Darwin's theory of chance variation, Butler's humor bubbled irrepressibly to the surface:

No one can tell a story so charmingly as Mr. Darwin, but I can no more believe that all this [the orchid's specific modification for fertilization] has come about without design on the part of the orchid, and a gradual perception of the advantages it is able to take over the bee, and a righteous determination to enjoy them, than I can believe that a mousetrap or a steam-engine is the result of the accumulation of blind minute fortuitous variations in a creature called man, which creature has never wanted either mouse-traps or steam-engines, but has had a sort of promiscuous tendency to make them, and was benefited by making them, so that those of the race who had a tendency to make them survived and left issue, which issue would thus naturally tend to make more mouse-traps and more steam-engines.<sup>1</sup>

Although in such passages Butler was quite serious, it is not surprising that some, remembering Erewhon and The Fair Haven, were in doubt.

Years after the appearance of Life and Habit Butler wrote to a friendly reviewer in New Zealand: "With Life and Habit the fat was in the Darwinian fire, and it was war to the death between us."<sup>2</sup> But at the time of publication there was no comment from Charles Darwin, although much of the book was addressed to him with an almost oral appeal. Neither "Truth's Champion" nor his bulldog entered the lists to knock down the man who thought that his ideas might prove to be an "adjunct to Darwinism."

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Life and Habit, 271-272.

<sup>2</sup> Vide supra, 139. (Footnote 2.)



A note made in later life shows Butler's bitter hurt:  
"...the book failed, it has not even now quite paid its expenses; it was allowed to pass sub silentio. There was no attempt to meet it, but abundant attempts to adopt its conclusions without acknowledgement."<sup>1</sup> In Luck, or Cunning? Butler comments:

I can understand Mr. Darwin's not having taken any public notice, for example, of Life and Habit, for though I did not attack him in force in that book, it was abundantly clear that an attack could not be long delayed, and a man may be pardoned for not doing anything to advertise the works of his opponents...<sup>2</sup>

Lest I may have given the impression by the above comment and by the humor in the passages which I have quoted from Life and Habit that taking notice of such a book might have been beneath the dignity of Charles Darwin, I should emphasize that Butler's theory was carefully worked out with a serious purpose in view. In her biography Mrs. Stillman describes the wide scope of Life and Habit and suggests a reason for Darwin's failure to meet Butler's arguments:

But he [Darwin] had made no answer to Life and Habit perhaps because the criticism it contained was on a scale and of a calibre so different from any other he had received that it overwhelmed him. It did not confine its criticism to details or even to the whole

<sup>1</sup>Note attached to Miss Savage's letter of October 6, 1877, Letters, 160.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Luck, or Cunning? 247.



view of natural selection. It offered a complete alternative theory of evolution in place of his, irreconcilable with it in every important premise and conclusion. In this it was unique, for all sweeping attacks on Darwin up to then had come from religionists who denied descent with modification, and he or Huxley knew how to deal with them. But here was an attempt not at criticism but at destruction from one of his own breed, one who had hailed him as right and master, and who now strove to prove that where he was right he was but a follower, and that where he was master, he was wrong.<sup>1</sup>

That Butler was influenced by his personal bitterness to take up cudgels to avenge the injustice that had been done to the older evolutionists cannot be denied. During 1878, following the failure of Life and Habit to create any stir among scientific circles, Butler worked steadily at the task of translating much of Buffon and Lamarck and thoroughly familiarizing himself with the work of Dr. Erasmus Darwin; and early in 1879 Evolution, Old and New came from the press with a deliberate attack upon Charles Darwin. In his book Butler, who believed that even Huxley's knowledge of the work of the earlier evolutionists was faulty,<sup>2</sup> presented to the public the views on evolution that had been held by Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck, and compared these with what he deemed were the definitely inferior views of Charles Darwin. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> Stillman, Samuel Butler, 155.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Unconscious Memory, 27-29.



in Evolution, Old and New, and in Unconscious Memory published one year later, Butler for the first time attacked Darwin's integrity as a writer.

Darwin, although meticulously careful in his observations and experiments, was undoubtedly a careless reader and often guilty of citing the views of others with an amazing disregard for accuracy.<sup>1</sup> And when his slips were brought to his attention he was given to revising without either a covering explanation or an apology. It was Butler who first gave prominence to the unfortunate inaccuracies and revisions; it was Butler who noted that the very title of Darwin's great work was misleading;<sup>2</sup> and it was Butler who gave a detailed analysis of Darwin's confusing use of the term 'natural selection'.<sup>3</sup>

Butler was convinced that the publication of Evolution, Old and New and Unconscious Memory made shipwreck of his literary prospects and did him grievous social injury as well.<sup>4</sup> It was not these "perfectly righteous books"

<sup>1</sup> See Basil Willey, The Hibbert Lectures 1959, Darwin and Butler: Two Versions of Evolution, 35-37; Butler, Evolution, Old and New, 315-316; and Unconscious Memory, 30-32, 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> See Butler, Life and Habit, 252-272; Evolution, Old and New, 346; and Luck, or Cunning? 81-84.

<sup>3</sup> See Butler, Evolution, Old and New, 345-361.

<sup>4</sup> Butler's 1901 note attached to a letter from Miss Savage, 1873, Letters, 40.



themselves that did the mischief, but the quarrel between Butler and Darwin which followed the publication of the first-named book. Believing that Charles Darwin (who made no mention of Buffon or Erasmus Darwin in the first edition of Origin of Species and dismissed the contribution of the latter in a line and a half in the third) had given the impression that the theory of evolution had been born out of his own head alone, "as a kind of literary Melchisedec, without father and without mother in the works of other people,"<sup>1</sup> Butler had set the record straight in Evolution, Old and New. Butler also believed that it was his example that caused Charles Darwin belatedly to pay tribute to his grandfather in The Life of Erasmus Darwin which appeared six months after Butler's book. And his belief was considerably strengthened when he found in Darwin's book a veiled attack upon himself, and obvious borrowings from Evolution, Old and New in the part of the Life contributed by Dr. Krause, Krause concluding his work with what seemed to be a searing reference to Butler as a writer showing "a weakness of thought and a mental anachronism which no one can envy."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Unconscious Memory, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Krause in The Life of Erasmus Darwin, quoted by Butler in The St. James's Gazette (December 8, 1880), quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 457.



The Life of Erasmus Darwin presented a paradox as Charles Darwin's preface deliberately stated by means of footnotes that Krause's work had been accurately translated from an article in a German magazine that had appeared in February, and added that Samuel Butler's book Evolution, Old and New had appeared since the publication of Dr. Krause's article. The Life of Erasmus Darwin, then, was a unique literary species as it attacked and borrowed from a work that had not yet been published. Disturbed by the veiled allusions to his book, and at last convinced that it was not just his "absurd vanity" that had led him to "rush to conclusions without sufficient grounds,"<sup>1</sup> Butler sent to Germany for the original article, and while waiting for it to arrive busied himself in acquiring enough German to translate it.

As the original article differed considerably from the version modified in the light of Evolution, Old and New, Butler wrote to Darwin for an explanation of the peculiar statement in his preface with regard to the accuracy of the translation. Darwin replied in a very unsatisfactory manner. His letter betrays an airy insouciance that is almost incredible:

Dr. Krause, soon after the appearance of his article in Kosmos, told me that he intended to publish it

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Unconscious Memory, 40.



separately and to alter it considerably, and the altered MS. was sent to Mr. Dallas for translation. This is so common a practice that it never occurred to me to state that the article had been modified; but now I much regret that I did not do so.... Should there be a reprint of the English Life, I will state that the original as it appeared in Kosmos was modified by Dr. Krause before it was translated. I may add that I had obtained Dr. Krause's consent for a translation before your book was announced. I remember this because Mr. Dallas wrote to tell me of the advertisement.<sup>1</sup>

It will be noted that Darwin failed to realize that he not only neglected to say that the article had been modified, but that he had deliberately stated the contrary, that the essay was an accurate translation of the original article which had appeared before Butler's book. The promise of making some future amendment, should a second edition be called for, was likely to bring little comfort to a man who was being mocked by reviewers who had gleefully seized upon Dr. Krause's final scathing phrase. After deliberating over Darwin's incomprehensible obtuseness for more than two weeks, Butler informed him that he would lay the matter before the public in the columns of The Athenaeum. The letter duly appeared, but there was no answer from the Darwin circle and Butler was repeatedly reviled in the press as the man who had had the presumption and infamy to attack

<sup>1</sup>Charles Darwin to Samuel Butler, January 3, 1880, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 448. (Darwin's concluding statement is ambiguous as Evolution, Old and New was announced February 22nd and advertised in May.)



Charles Darwin.

Furbank refers to the controversy as a "foolish little dispute,"<sup>1</sup> and by his own condensation of the quarrel reduces it to fit his description. Muggeridge's presentation is even more brief, and as he fails to make a single comment upon the unworthy behaviour of Charles Darwin, his discussion of Butler's reaction seems unnecessarily biased. Mrs. Stillman gives a very full account and fine analysis of the quarrel and shows that her sympathies are indisputably with Butler. And she does not appear to accept wholeheartedly the first conclusion reached by Jones and Francis Darwin in the pamphlet entitled "Charles Darwin and Samuel Butler, a Step towards Reconciliation" which reviewed the quarrel in 1910. Although it was Francis Darwin who persuaded Jones to reconsider the old quarrel in the light of certain of Charles Darwin's letters and papers that he was now willing to have published, it may very well be that Jones was willing to reconsider the dispute, because the public laying of a particularly contumacious old ghost might stimulate the sales of a new edition of Unconscious Memory which he and Streatfeild had recently published through Fifield, and be favorable to other forthcoming Butler material.

<sup>1</sup>Furbank, Samuel Butler, 52.



Whatever the reason for the re-consideration, Jones's handling of the quarrel up to the point of his correspondence with Francis Darwin in 1910 is admirable, and in the Memoir he executes his analysis with a sharp wit worthy of his teacher. The only point he seems to have omitted is the fact that Dr. Krause, as well as covertly attacking Butler, borrowed rather freely from him without acknowledgement. However, no matter how good Jones's intentions were in producing his pamphlet, it is evident that he has done his friend a disservice, as, lacking the guidance of Butler's penetrating eye for hypocrisy, Jones allowed himself to be almost completely won over by the evidence Francis Darwin produced at the late date of 1910.

Francis Darwin, desirous of vindicating his father's memory, approached Jones, who was writing Butler's biography, with evidence that would throw new light on the old dispute. From Butler, Jones had inherited a distrust of Charles Darwin, and also believed that "Francis Darwin had descended from his father with singularly little modification." However, although at first suspicious, he was disarmed by the evidence that Francis Darwin now put before him, and wrote that as early as 1879-80 he had suspected that Butler had been wrong in thinking that The Life of Erasmus Darwin had been undertaken because of, or with reference to, Evolution, Old and New, and he further stated that he was



now convinced that Butler had been mistaken.<sup>1</sup> And he added this fatuous and demonstrably false statement: "...if he had known what was contained in the letters he would have been confirmed in what he wrote in his preface to the second edition of Evolution, Old and New, that Charles Darwin may have been right and he wrong, and would have taken or made an opportunity of putting the matter straight."<sup>2</sup> Jones then proceeded with his happy steps towards reconciliation by reducing the case to three points upon which he and Francis Darwin reached a compromise. The first point "that Charles Darwin undertook Erasmus Darwin because of or with reference to Evolution, Old and New," which Jones gave up, is absurd as it conceals the real gravamen that the work constituted an attack on Samuel Butler and that this fact is categorically denied in the preface. The other two points, "that his preface contained an error" and "that he made a mistake in the line he took when the error was pointed out to him," were from the first so patent that the case scarcely needed to be reconsidered to reach an agreement about them. However, as in 1958 Lady Barlow in a very full treatment of the controversy reproduced Jones's pamphlet together with many previously

<sup>1</sup> Jones, Memoir, II, 427.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.



unpublished family letters pertaining to the quarrel, the evidence of the conciliators should be re-examined.

Jones was quite right in believing that Butler, had he seen the letters produced by Francis Darwin in 1910, "would have taken or made an opportunity of putting the matter straight," but perhaps not quite in the manner Jones had in mind. Jones was carried into the enemy's magic circle on the strength of incontestable proof that Charles Darwin had actually stated Dr. Krause's article had been enlarged, but that the sentence had unfortunately been struck from the proof of the preface together with other matter which Dr. Krause had wished deleted. Jones is an enigma as he himself notes the falsity in one of Charles Darwin's statements in a "proposed letter" to The Athenaeum,<sup>1</sup> but fails to note another much graver perversion of the truth in a second tentative reply, and, indeed, makes it difficult for anyone else to do so, because he separates a crucial piece of evidence by some 568 pages from the documentation of the quarrel that appears in an appendix to his Memoir. This important clue, supplied by Francis Darwin whose case for the vindication of his father's memory it invalidates, does appear in the pamphlet, but Jones's failure to make any comment and the strange omission from the documentation of the quarrel in the

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 327. Vide poste, 170.



Memoir suggest that he attached no importance to a significant piece of evidence.

The evidence that Francis Darwin produced in 1910 shows that Darwin was not nearly so unconcerned as Butler believed. Indeed, his panic was sufficient to drive him to prepare a tentative answer before Butler's charge actually appeared in The Athenaeum.<sup>1</sup> The Darwin family objected to this proposed letter (as well they might) and Darwin prepared a second answer that specifically refers to

<sup>1</sup>The date of Darwin's first tentative reply is January 24th, that of Butler's attack in The Athenaeum, January 31st. Jones cannot "fathom" the pre-dating of Darwin's letter, but Lady Barlow believes that the reply may have been incorrectly dated later as Darwin certainly sent it with a covering letter to his daughter, Mrs. Litchfield, on February 1st. I maintain that January 24th is the correct date, and my contention that alarm caused Darwin to prepare an answer before the attack came gains some support from a comment in a letter that Mrs. Darwin wrote on January 26th: "F [father] is a good deal bothered by S. Butler's attack which is expected in The Athenaeum. He wrote a note to F [father] saying he was going to lay 'all the facts' before the public. We are all anxious that he should take no notice of it." (Quoted by Lady Barlow in her edition of The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 201.) Obviously, Darwin had to wait until he received his copy of The Athenaeum before sending his tentative reply to his daughter, Mrs. Litchfield. Both Darwin's tentative reply and Butler's attack are quoted in Jones, Memoir, Appendix C, 448-452. Part Two of Lady Barlow's edition of The Autobiography of Charles Darwin is devoted to "The Butler Controversy" wherein are quoted family letters in addition to Henry Festing Jones's pamphlet.



Butler's letter in The Athenaeum. Again the family objected, and Darwin appealed to Huxley stating, "I should rather like to show that I had intended to state that Krause had enlarged his article."<sup>1</sup> This sentence as it appears in the pamphlet is baffling, because in his first letter, written but a week before, he had stated that he possessed the original proof of his preface (which had indeed stated that the article had been enlarged) and therefore the means of "showing" lay at his disposal. However, the letters published by Lady Barlow in 1958 reveal the cause of Darwin's hesitancy. His daughter, Mrs. Litchfield, had cautioned him thus:

I foresee one result of your letter that Butler will say you have been guilty of another quibble,-- first you say to him that it never occurred to you to state that Krause had altered his article and then that you actually had it in the proof sheets and as you say accidentally omitted to publish it. Now Butler will say which of these two statements are true--and so it gives him scope for a whole set of fresh insults,--and with his clever pen he can make something very disagreeable out of this.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, her husband, to emphasize just how disagreeable Butler could be, had concocted an imaginary sarcastic reply from the satirist. Darwin's airy arrogance in his letter to Butler had, in effect, made it impossible to use

<sup>1</sup>Darwin to Huxley, February 2, 1880, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 453-454.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Litchfield to Charles Darwin (undated), quoted in Lady Barlow's edition of The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 207.



the evidence of the original preface which would have partly cleared Darwin's name. Darwin's family believed that the only way in which he could retain his dignity was to let Butler's insinuations go unanswered as beneath contempt. As Darwin was still not convinced, it was agreed that Huxley should be the final arbiter. It is evident that Darwin realized the seriousness of his position for he wrote to Huxley: "...a clever and unscrupulous man like Mr. Butler would be sure to twist whatever I may say against me; and the longer the controversy lasts the more degrading it is to me."<sup>1</sup> Huxley wisely advised against sending the letter, for it was such that neither cleverness, unscrupulousness, nor twisting would have been required to show its falsity.

Jones himself noted the perversion of the truth in the final sentence of this remarkable letter reading: "As Mr. Butler evidently does not believe my deliberate assertion that the above omission was unintentional, I must decline any further discussion with him."<sup>2</sup> Jones pointed out that Butler never received any such assertion but merely a statement to the effect that altering a work before

<sup>1</sup> Darwin to Huxley, February 2, 1880, quoted in Jones Memoir, II, Appendix C, 453-454.

<sup>2</sup> Darwin to The Athenaeum, proposed letter No. II, February 1, 1880, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 453.



republication was such a common practice that it had never occurred to Darwin to state that the article had been enlarged. However, charmed by the fact that Francis Darwin possessed proof of his father's original intention, Jones allowed the gross exaggeration to pass and proceeded with the reconciliation.

To achieve this reconciliation Jones had to pick his way around one further serious obstruction. This was the damning piece of evidence, supplied by Francis Darwin, which appears without comment in the pamphlet and in the Memoir so far distant from the documentation of the quarrel that the clue almost escapes detection. In May 1879, following the publication of Evolution, Old and New, Charles Darwin sent a copy of the book to Dr. Krause expressing the hope that he would "not expend much powder and shot on Mr. Butler, for he really is not worthy of it. His book is merely ephemeral."<sup>1</sup> In view of Darwin's deliberate action and advice it is difficult to understand how Jones could maintain that he believed that Charles Darwin had not undertaken Erasmus Darwin with reference to Butler's book.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Excerpt from a letter from Charles Darwin to Dr. Krause, May 1879, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 326. (The italics are mine.)

<sup>2</sup>In view of Darwin's letter to Krause in May 1879, Mrs. Stillman does not believe that Darwin can be considered as "entirely innocent of the general connexion of his book with Evolution, Old and New as he appeared..." See Stillman, Samuel Butler, 154.



The evidence which Jones apparently found so insignificant would have brought joy to Butler's sore heart, for in it lay proof for a charge that he had never made but which he was accused of making.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Butler of course believed that the public announcement of Evolution, Old and New on February 22nd (just ten days after the publication of Dr. Krause's original article in Kosmos) was the event that spurred Darwin to pay tardy tribute to his grandfather. Darwin, as was mentioned earlier, claimed in his letter to Butler that he had arranged for the translation of Krause's article prior to the announcement of Butler's book, but as Darwin also uses the term "advertisement" in the same letter his statement lacks clarity. I believe that Darwin referred to the advertisement which appeared in May, as, unless he corresponded with Dr. Krause prior to the publication of the original essay in Kosmos on February 12th, ten days seems a scant time for the

<sup>1</sup>"Mr. Romanes implies that I imagine Mr. Darwin to have 'entered into a foul conspiracy with Dr. Krause, the editor of Kosmos' as against my book Evolution, Old and New, and later on he supposes me to believe that I have discovered what he calls, in a style of English peculiar to our leading scientists, 'an erroneous conspiracy.' The idea of any conspiracy at all never entered my mind, and there is not a word in Unconscious Memory which will warrant Mr. Romanes' imputation. A man can make a cat's paw of another without entering into a conspiracy with him." Butler in Nature (February 3, 1881), quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 460.



magazine to have reached Down and the consequent arrangements for a translation to have been made. Had a letter to Dr. Krause bearing a date prior to February 22nd existed, it seems certain that the Darwin family would have produced it. Dr. Krause himself, in denying that the knowledge of what Butler was writing could have had anything to do with Darwin's desire for a translation, stated that he received the request two months prior to the publication of Evolution, Old and New which of course only serves to substantiate Butler's assumption that it was the February announcement, promising "'copious extracts' from the works of Dr. Erasmus Darwin and a comparison of his theory with that of his grandson Mr. Charles Darwin,"<sup>1</sup> that prompted the request.

Had Butler had Jones's opportunity he would have spurned any steps towards reconciliation, for in the first of Charles Darwin's proposed letters to The Athenaeum his eye would have been arrested by this fascinating paragraph-- the very one to which Darwin's family, for some reason, objected:

He is mistaken in supposing that I was offended by his book, for I looked only at the part about the life of Erasmus Darwin; I did not even look at the part about evolution; for I had found in his former work that I could not make his views harmonize with what I knew. I was, indeed, told that this part contained

<sup>1</sup> Butler in Nature (February 3, 1881), quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 460.



some bitter sarcasms against me;<sup>1</sup> but this determined me all the more not to read it.

This passage in view of what Darwin had written to Dr. Krause,<sup>2</sup> forces a dilemma upon the reader, for a scrupulous man like Charles Darwin would scarcely dismiss as "ephemeral" a book he had not read; on the other hand, a careful investigator like Mr. Darwin, had he read it, could not dub such a work as Evolution, Old and New as "ephemeral". The horns of dilemma are never very comfortable, and here they are sufficiently sharp to persuade one to believe that perhaps Darwin's family made their objections because the passage lacked the truthfulness that would be expected from one who had been hailed as "the greatest living Englishman."

In his second proposed letter Charles Darwin dealt with the matter of the interpolations with unsuspected skill, and as his first stumbling efforts to produce a worthy answer for Samuel Butler's letter in The Athenaeum put one off guard, the double entendre almost passes unnoticed. In his second letter Darwin wrote: "The additions were made quite independently of any suggestion or wish on my part."<sup>3</sup> Taken at face value, this statement

<sup>1</sup> Darwin to The Athenaeum, proposed letter No. I, January 24, 1880, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 452.

<sup>2</sup> Vide ante, 172.

<sup>3</sup> Darwin to The Athenaeum, proposed letter No. II, February 1, 1880, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 453.



implies to the uninformed that Darwin made no suggestion, but his remark in the letter to Dr. Krause assures one that that cannot be Charles Darwin's meaning, and therefore one is forced to conclude that, although Darwin had indeed made a suggestion, Dr. Krause was completely uninfluenced by the wishes of the greatest living scientist and proceeded to attack Butler from his own inclination.

Assuredly, contrary to the opinion of Jones, Huxley exercised splendid judgment in vetoing the sending of this letter, because, even without the evidence of Darwin's comment to Krause, a skilful adversary like Samuel Butler could have had great fun with Darwin's efforts to appear nonchalant as the same letter contains this statement: "It is a mere illusion on the part of Mr. Butler to suppose that it could make any difference to me whether or not the public knew that Dr. Krause's article had been added to or altered before being translated."<sup>1</sup> Again Mr. Darwin exhibits a surprising blindness, for of course the difference did not affect him: it affected Samuel Butler. With the exception of Francis Darwin, the Darwin circle seems not to have realized that Butler was wronged by the great scientist's carelessness. Many years later when Mrs. Litchfield was preparing Emma Darwin for the press and wished to use one

<sup>1</sup>Darwin to The Athenaeum, proposed letter No. II, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, Appendix C, 453.



of Huxley's letters about the quarrel, Francis advised her not to include the controversy with the comment:

"There was a sort of truce between Butler and our side, and now he is dead; and after all I now think he had some cause of complaint though he entirely lost his head and behaved abominably."<sup>1</sup> It should be noted, too, that Francis Darwin always regretted that he had not gone to see Butler and settled the matter face to face.

With bitterness born of the reprobation he suffered for having attacked Darwin, Butler wrote:

...it is pretended that he was one of those men who were ever on the watch for new ideas, ever ready to give a helping hand to those who were trying to advance our knowledge, ever willing to own to a mistake and give up even his most cherished ideas if truth required them at his hands. No conception can be more wantonly inexact.<sup>2</sup>

This is harsh judgment, but it has been shown that Butler had evident justification in making it. Mrs. Stillman has emphasized the fact that Darwin was an old and sick man who was carefully shielded from physical fatigue or anxiety of any kind. It is also likely that his memory was no longer reliable for recent happenings, for the manner in which he contradicts himself in his letters indicates a

<sup>1</sup>Francis Darwin to his sister Henrietta Litchfield, 1904, quoted in Lady Barlow's edition of The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 216.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Luck, or Cunning? 247.



failure of this nature. According to his son, Darwin was deeply pained by Butler's attack, but the evidence shows that much of his pain must have been born of a sense of guilt. His letter to Krause, his neglect in failing to change the footnotes in his revised preface, his absurd letter to Butler, his false statements in the letters he prepared for an answer to Butler's attack in The Athenaeum, his failure to use the evidence of the revised proof at a time when it would have carried some conviction, and his continued aloofness in the face of Butler's repeated attacks show a guilty, or at least partly guilty, man hiding in dignified silence behind an impregnable reputation.

Undoubtedly, Butler exaggerated the importance of his personal quarrel with Darwin, but the following remarks by a reviewer of Unconscious Memory show that the injury Butler suffered was real enough:

A certain nobody writes a book [Evolution, Old and New] accusing the most illustrious man in his generation of burying the claims of certain illustrious predecessors out of the sight of all men. In the hope of gaining some notoriety by deserving, and perhaps receiving a contemptuous refutation from the eminent man in question, he publishes this book which, if it deserved serious consideration, would be not more of an insult to the particular man of science whom it accuses of conscious and wholesale plagiarism [there is no such accusation in Evolution, Old and New] than it would be to men of science in general for requiring such elementary instruction on some of the most famous literature in science from an upstart ignoramus, who, until two or three years ago, considered himself a painter by profession.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Romanes, A review of Unconscious Memory in Nature, January 27, 1881, quoted in Butler, Evolution, Old and New (second edition), Appendix, 391. (The square brackets are Butler's.)



But I believe that the greatest injury the quarrel inflicted on Butler was the effect it had on his character. His conflict with Darwin was not born of intense personal bitterness, but the quarrel greatly aggravated his sense of personal injury. His hostility became so extreme that his good friend Miss Savage when reading the manuscript of Unconscious Memory cautioned him thus:

Page 75 is rather strong is it not? I dare say you will call me squeamish, but I don't think I am. I am only afraid that people may say your pistol misses fire, if you take to knocking down your opponents with the butt end of it, and I am afraid the passage is just one which hostile reviewers will pick out and parade, and hundreds of people who read reviews will not feel drawn towards reading the book.... You, who are so capable of an exquisite refinement of cruelty, why will you be violent? ...When Darwin is quite demolished, you will have to look about for another victim. I dare say there is another humbug somewhere quite as bad.<sup>1</sup>

The injustice he received from Darwin confirmed Butler's Ishmaelite tendencies: he became overly sensitive to criticism and unnaturally suspicious of those who wished to be friendly. It now seemed that he needed not so much to have a victim as to be one.

Mrs. Stillman has found a parallel between Butler's revolt against his father and that against Charles Darwin in that both constituted a conflict with "personified authority and an accepted belief."<sup>2</sup> It is also evident

<sup>1</sup>Miss Savage to Butler, September, 1880, Letters, 231-232.

<sup>2</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 130.



that in each case it was Butler's egotism that led him to believe that he could defeat each man on his own ground by his own rational powers. But it was his rationalism that fed his ego so that both conflicts strengthened the worst and most self-destructive trait in his character. It should also be noted that in both cases the conflict was rooted in an original hostility so distant that the initial cause of rebellion had become part of his unconscious memory, for long before the dispute with Darwin had developed its full bitterness the controversy with the Bishop of Wellington had brought to Butler's attention the two flaws in Darwin: his disregard for the contribution of others, and his habit of modifying his work drastically without warning his readers that he had done so.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Butler's Friendships

"Cleanse me not, Lord, I say, from secret sin  
But from those faults which he who runs can see,  
'Tis these that torture me, O Lord, begin  
With these and let the hidden vices be..."<sup>1</sup>

Few writers have been more preoccupied than Butler with thoughts about posthumous fame, and few can have been more methodical in arranging great quantities of material for the use of future biographers. Butler was convinced that although he failed with his own generation, another would find his work of some value, and, accordingly, he made elaborate preparations for the time when he would secure at least a measure of fame and immortality "where dead men meet, on lips of living men."<sup>2</sup> As Muggeridge observes, "He swept himself up, the minutest crumbs; he dissected himself; he embalmed his spirit and laid it out, like a Pharaoh's body, to last for all time."<sup>3</sup> Butler's preparations included the careful ordering and annotating of a voluminous amount of correspondence; the recording in six substantial note-books of his thoughts, fancies, observations, and comments on his life; the writing of a

<sup>1</sup> Butler, "A Prayer," in The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 395.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, "Μέλλοντα ταῦτα," in The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 397.

<sup>3</sup> Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 130.



semi-autobiographical novel; the detailed narration of his relationships with his closest friends; the writing of several extremely personal sonnets; and the complete remodelling of a young man who was to become his biographer, Henry Festing Jones, by supplanting Jones's attitudes, tastes, habits, and dislikes with his own, almost as completely as doctors replace the blood of a baby born with an Rh. factor of incompatibility.<sup>1</sup> Jones seems to have been quite unaware of what was happening to him. In his preface to the Memoir he rather pathetically remarks, "I do not think it ever crossed Butler's mind that his biography might be written by me."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he flatly denies that Butler's daily labor for many years in "destroying, preserving, copying, editing, indexing and dating" was prompted by any confident anticipation of his biography being wanted.<sup>3</sup> If, however, Jones is sincere in these two beliefs, one can only conclude that in spite of his long association with Butler he did not truly know his patron.

If Butler were not Butler, his painstaking concern for the interests of posterity should have been of

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 131. Muggeridge comments, "...he bred up a biographer to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. He emptied Jones and poured in his own spirit..."

<sup>2</sup>Jones, Memoir, preface, viii.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, Memoir, preface, vii.



inestimable help to anyone wishing to write about him. However, because Butler is Butler one wishes that the discovery he planned giving the Erewhonians had been available. The device he had in mind was somewhat similar to an x-ray machine but much more useful in that it could catch the rays emanating from a man's soul and photograph on a plate a true picture of his spiritual nature, character, principles, and disposition.<sup>1</sup> That Butler was capable of imagining this device shows that he was very conscious that such an instrument would be of great usefulness to biographers in clearing up certain difficulties.

Nowhere are these difficulties more apparent than in the material Butler has written about his best friends-- and that there are difficulties is extremely unfortunate as one might expect to find Butler's character emerging most clearly from his letters and from the accounts he has given of his friendships. He admits that his letters were often "common form and padding" and very often insincere,<sup>2</sup> but one would not expect this to be true of his letters to his dearest friends. Unfortunately, in the case of Butler's most interesting friendship, that with Charles Paine Pauli, much of the evidence has either been destroyed or camouflaged so as to escape detection,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 293.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Memoir, preface, ix.

<sup>3</sup> Vide infra, 212.



and almost all that remains to describe an association which lasted thirty years is the account written by Butler in 1898, a few months after Pauli's death, and this is a strange essay which raises more questions than it answers.

All Butler's biographers have given a great deal of attention to his friendship with Pauli, but, as Pauli asked for his letters to be returned and as Butler apparently did not make copies of his letters to Pauli (as was often his custom), they have relied on the account of the friendship written by Butler in 1898, which, as he himself noted, is but an ex parte statement, as Pauli's version of the story can never be known. Jones as a biographer has the limitation of being almost an echo of Butler. Jones disliked Pauli, but his animosity is cleverly concealed, as it was only necessary for him to give excerpts from Butler's essay to present a picture of Pauli that was black enough to shock Pauli's friends into writing letters of protest to The Times Literary Supplement when the Memoir appeared. Jones's own remarks about Pauli are chiefly notable for their restraint. His comment on the friendship echoes a phrase used by Butler,<sup>1</sup> but is such that anyone might make after reading Butler's narrative:

<sup>1</sup>Vide infra, 187.



It seems to have been one of those one-sided friendships sometimes met with in real life, as well as in books, when the diffident, poetical, shy man becomes devoted to the confident, showy, worldly man, as a dog to his master.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Stillman accepts the revelations of Butler's essay and sums up Pauli as "the complete leech, his cool impregnable selfishness fantastic in its perfection."<sup>2</sup> Again, the man whose aim was the complete denigration of Butler's character had no reason to quarrel with the picture Butler gave of his friend, as that picture suited Muggeridge's purpose excellently in showing Butler's false sense of values, his quixotic behaviour, and the imbalance of his emotional nature. Henderson alone is a little sceptical about Butler's account of his friendship with Pauli, as he finds this comment made in 1898 describing the state of the relationship at Christmas in 1877, "I was oppressed at all times with a sense of the utter iniquity of the treatment I was receiving,"<sup>3</sup> incompatible with the sentiments expressed a few weeks earlier in 1877 in the dedication of Life and Habit: "This book is inscribed to Charles Paine Pauli, Esq., barrister-at-law, in acknowledgement of his invaluable criticism of the proof-

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 108. Cf. Butler, Butleriana, 45.

<sup>2</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 111.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 59.



sheets of this and of my previous books and in recognition of an old and well-tried friendship." Henderson, with understandable doubt, remarks: "If Butler's account of their 'friendship' is true, nothing could be more ironical. But perhaps it is not the whole truth."<sup>1</sup> Henderson sums up Butler's essay as a somewhat sour document, and observes:

One can only conclude either that Pauli was not as bad as Butler painted him, or that Butler was an ideal victim who derived satisfaction from humiliating himself to a stronger and more worldly nature, and after Pauli's death revenged himself by humiliating him in the eyes of posterity.<sup>2</sup>

It can be demonstrated, I believe, that Henderson comes very close to the truth.

In the two preceding chapters, I have considered two important influences upon Butler's life which had their roots in the New Zealand period. The friendship with Charles Paine Pauli was a third great influence that dated from that time of exile. When Butler was making arrangements to sell his run some eight months before he left the colony, he became intimate with Charles Pauli, a sub-editor of the Christchurch paper. Pauli, having been educated at Winchester and Oxford, and possessing as well as education those other attributes of the gentleman which Butler found so attractive--good looks, good clothes, and

<sup>1</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 68.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 88.



what we should term poise or self-assurance but what Butler calls "a good address"--made an instant impression upon Butler when Pauli one evening made an unexpected friendly call. When Pauli left at midnight Butler was aware that he had suddenly become intimate with a personality quite different from that of anyone he had ever known.<sup>1</sup> In the months which followed, the friendship developed rapidly, and Butler notes, "...we were constantly together--I being devoted to him much as a dog to his master."<sup>2</sup>

It is reasonable to suppose that the master taught the dog new tricks, and if one compares the type of writing that Butler did prior to his friendship with Pauli with that done afterwards, it would seem that Pauli played an important part in helping Butler to subdue the instincts and reactions of his "Langar" self. Although it would not be fair to base such a surmise entirely on a comparison of A First Year in Canterbury Settlement and Erewhon--the first book was designed to please Canon Butler and was revised by him, and the second was designed to annoy him and succeeded in doing so--the two works are in fact as different as water and wine. And a study of Butler's letters would show, I think, that those letters written prior to 1864

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 45.



would never have led Miss Savage to become Butler's captive correspondent. Some of the later letters do occasionally revert to the early rather pompous style, but only when Butler adopts his old Langar pose to write to May or to someone like her.

Bertrand Russell might have been thinking of Samuel Butler when he wrote:

Emphatic and reiterated assertion, especially during childhood, produces in most people a belief so firm as to have a hold even over the unconscious, and many of us who imagine that our attitude towards orthodoxy is quite emancipated are still, in fact, subconsciously controlled by its teachings.<sup>1</sup>

Fanny Butler's lessons had left their mark, and even after a life-time as a sceptic, Butler when deeply moved, instinctively used phrases from his old faith.<sup>2</sup> In Pauli, however, Butler found the lively intellectual companionship he had missed, and one can safely assume that he tested his theories about the Crucifixion on his new friend whose irreverent spirit was just what Butler then needed to set him free from his feelings of guilt.

It should be admitted that perhaps one does an injustice to Pauli in terming him irreverent, as, apart from Butler's essay, the material concerning him is scanty

<sup>1</sup>Russell, Marriage and Morals, 38-39.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Faesch was startled to receive a poetic tribute from Butler in which the old sceptic importuned the Lord, God, and Heaven to guide, guard, and keep his friend. See Jones, Memoir, II, 205.



indeed. In the edition of the Note-Books prepared by Jones there are no Pauli witticisms or recognizable references to him apart from three brief statements in the biographical outline. The Further Extracts prepared by Bartholomew contains seven notes about Pauli, four of which are quotations calculated to offend the orthodox. Keynes and Hill brought out a new edition of the Note-Books in 1951, but, although they produce some previously unpublished material, space is given to just four notes concerning Pauli, and of these only one is completely new. However, it would seem that the series of outrageous remarks made by Butler about Christ and Christianity which appear in Bartholomew's edition must have been sparked by the appreciative laughter of a fellow sceptic, and it is likely that that laughter was usually provided by Pauli.

Butler was twenty-seven years of age when he met his first great friend. Pauli was some years younger, but his charm, savoir faire, and self-confidence attracted Butler greatly as he was keenly aware of his own lack of these qualities. And something else about Pauli attracted Butler. In the story of their friendship which Butler wrote in 1898 there appears the following enigmatic passage:

Perhaps the secret of it all lay in the fact of my knowing well that I had not passed by the ambush of young days scatheless, whereas I could see (and I imagine truly) that to Pauli there had been no ambush



of young days at all. The main desire of my life was to conceal how severely I had been wounded, and to get beyond the reach of those arrows that from time to time still reached me. When, therefore, Pauli seemed attracted towards me and held out the right hand of fellowship, I caught at it not only because I liked him, but because I believed that the mere fact of being his friend would buoy me up in passing through waters that to me were still deep and troubled, but which to him I felt sure were shallow and smooth as glass.<sup>1</sup>

Questions immediately arise in the reader's mind, for Butler's use of so many figurative phrases is extremely unusual, and one gathers that he is referring to more than the troubles of which he has made us aware: the limitations of his upbringing in a rigid clerical environment, his father's dominance, his mother's little treacheries, and his rejection of ordination. And the succeeding paragraph fails to clarify the puzzling metaphors. Butler comments on the narrowness of his youthful environment, his education, and his last-minute recoil from the church, but some of his sentences are curiously suggestive of a mysterious weakness:

I was then nearly seven and twenty, and it goes without saying that I should have known more than I did, and been stronger than I was.... Academic life will not seriously enfeeble those who are naturally robust, fond of games, and little given to thinking...<sup>2</sup>

Butler appears to be speaking in riddles. His character had been sufficiently strong to defy the bullying of his

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 42-43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 43.



father, his spirit had been sufficiently adventurous to undertake emigration and face an entirely new kind of life, and, if his exertions on the Cam had not sufficiently hardened his constitution, his life on a New Zealand sheep-run certainly had greatly developed his physical fitness. In any case, Pauli's education had been similar to his own, and there is no evidence to show that Pauli was athletic or that he was particularly strong physically. In fact, at the time Butler made his acquaintance, Pauli was very ill and continued to be in poor health for the rest of his life. Butler would seem, therefore, to be hinting at a moral--rather than a physical--weakness in himself, and this weakness evidently played some part in his relationship with Pauli.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the friendship, however, it was probably Pauli's ill-health that most attracted Butler. Pauli was suffering from a seriously infected tongue and throat; and Butler feared the worst.<sup>2</sup> Butler, rather than requiring a stronger character to lean upon, needed to be needed as his subsequent associations with Jones, Alfred Cathie (his secretary), and Hans Faesch plainly show. And Butler never could resist a patient. On channel crossings,

<sup>1</sup>This point will be discussed later in the chapter as the passages just quoted have a definite connection with Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered.

<sup>2</sup>Butler's remarks about the doctors' diagnosis in Pauli's case seem, if anything, to hold a slight tinge of regret: "...I supposed the mischief to be syphilitic, but the doctors said it was nothing of the kind--it was only that he was thoroughly out of health." See Butleriana, 45.



for example, he found peculiar pleasure in carrying basins for less fortunate fellow passengers. Moreover, his letters show that he had an avid interest in ill-health and that he was never happier than when nursing Pauli, Jones, or Alfred through a serious illness. Muggeridge in listing Butler's fears includes that of disease,<sup>1</sup> but the charge is absolutely unjust, as pneumonia, scarlet-fever, typhoid-fever, and even possible syphilis repelled him not at all when a friend needed him. When, therefore, he learned that his new friend was not only charming, witty, and self-assured, but also ill, Butler found Pauli even more attractive than before. And when he learned, further, that Pauli's friends believed that the young man would never recover unless he returned to England--a move quite out of the question because of Pauli's lack of money--Butler not only immediately offered a passage home and an allowance of two hundred pounds a year until Pauli should complete his legal training and be called to the bar, but also made a will almost wholly in his new friend's favor.<sup>2</sup>

On their return to London Butler and Pauli took rooms

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 105.

<sup>2</sup>In 1864 Butler had the prospect of an income of £800 a year. That Pauli should have carefully preserved the will of this period leads Henderson to surmise that he may have done so with the idea of upsetting Butler's later will which was made when Butler's fortune was many times larger, but as the second will also made ample provision for Pauli, Henderson's conjecture seems to be unreasonable. (See Henderson, Samuel Butler, 85.)



in Clifford's Inn, and for a year they were much in each other's company. Not surprisingly, however, the friendship in time began to cool and Pauli moved to the West End. Years later, in 1898, a disillusioned Butler wrote:

All this time, however, I had felt--from the very beginning--that my intimacy with Pauli was only superficial, and I also perceived more and more that I bored him.... He cared little for literature, and nothing for philosophy, music or the arts.<sup>1</sup>

Pauli, apparently, was interested only in law and in society, both of which were boring to Butler. Nevertheless, in spite of their lack of common interests, the association, with its daily luncheons and two-hundred-pound allowance, continued long after Pauli was called. Indeed, although the luncheons were latterly cut down to three times a week, the payments went on for over thirty years until Pauli's death freed Butler from an obligation that had twice led him to the verge of bankruptcy and had once forced him to beg help from his father.<sup>2</sup>

In 1879 the Canon came to Butler's aid, but, as his private enquiries had led him to believe that his son's friend was making something approaching a thousand pounds a year in his law practice, he balked at the possibility of supporting Pauli also. Butler scoffed at his father's impression of his friend's affluence, but had to give both

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 47.

<sup>2</sup>Only the Canon's death in 1886 prevented that soul-scarring embarrassment from occurring a second time.



a detailed account of all his past expenditures and the promise that he would stop subsidizing Pauli. Naturally, Butler was furious, and excerpts from his twenty-page confidential account show him to be seething with righteous indignation. The vehemence with which Butler lays his countercharges against one from whom he is asking assistance causes the reader to wonder whether the gentleman does protest too much:

The story as you put it wears a very ugly appearance; if it were true, it would reflect strongly upon Pauli, and hardly less so indirectly upon myself. There is, however, so little truth in it, not only this, but such small appearance of truth, that I wonder you should have thought it worthy of any credence.... It was never contemplated that anything I then did--very easily--very gladly--and with a perfect right to do it--should be raked up against him years afterwards, exaggerated, distorted, put into juxtaposition with calumnious stories almost wholly without foundation, canvassed by yourself with a sister whose ways of looking at things are widely different from my own, and go afterwards I know not where, nor in what shape.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the tone of the letter, however, the Canon--surprisingly enough--came to his son's rescue.

According to Butler, between six and seven thousand pounds moved from his pocket to Pauli's over the thirty-year period, although Butler is careful to state that Pauli never asked for money, nor complained when it was not forthcoming. He insists that money was to Pauli like cream

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Butler to Canon Butler, 1879, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 70-71.



to a cat, but that it had to be given to him.<sup>1</sup> Pauli accepted the money, we gather, with a truly feline haughtiness, for Butler maintains that the more he did for him, the more his friend kept him at arm's length, and that latterly he did not know Pauli's address or meet his friends, as Pauli was secretive about his social set as well as about his earnings. Butler evidently merely gathered the impression that Pauli was in great financial difficulties, for Butler reiterates again and again that Pauli never made any direct statement about being pressed for money: when queried, "...he burst into a passionate flood of tears, but do what I might I could get nothing out of him, except a general impression that he was just covering his expenses, and a promise that in the course of the ensuing year he would be more explicit."<sup>2</sup>

Pauli, we are told, continued to burst into tears on the annual occasions when Butler, hoping to be released from supporting his friend, attempted to gain some inkling of his financial position. That Butler should have continued to pay out two hundred pounds a year just because Pauli's tear ducts functioned readily each Christmas is remarkable, but he was convinced that without the subsidy

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 59.



Pauli would founder or even commit suicide. There seems to have been no concrete basis in fact or circumstance for his belief, for a letter from the Canon shows that Butler was fully aware that Pauli lived on a much more lavish scale than he did himself. The Canon wrote that he did not quite understand Pauli's continuing to accept the allowance when Pauli very well knew that Butler was without funds, and he noted, with justified bewilderment, that the purpose of the allowance was not merely to allow Pauli to live but to enable him to make an appearance that would "impress others with the notion that he was doing more than he really was."<sup>1</sup>

The evidence of the nature of the Canon's bewilderment weakens the effect of Butler's outraged claim in the essay:

I had been shocked at learning the style in which Pauli evidently lived and the amount he had been making at the bar while doing his utmost to convince me that he was not clearing anything at all. I understand now why Pauli had preserved such an iron silence when I implored him to deal with me somewhat after the fashion in which I had dealt with him. The iniquity of the thing as it first struck me in full force upset me...<sup>2</sup>

The shock of learning that Pauli had been making a handsome income was sufficient, Butler would have us believe, to make him suddenly remember the letter which his father had

<sup>1</sup>Canon Butler to Samuel Butler, 1879, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 71.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 82.



written in 1879. That Butler, who cherished in his memory every wrong that his father had done him, should have forgotten the bitter correspondence of 1879 seems incredible. If Butler is writing truthfully, he has given us another example of his happy facility in barring from his conscious memory unpleasant incidents in which he had some degree of guilt.<sup>1</sup>

Following the discovery that his friend had left an estate of approximately nine thousand pounds but not even a kind word to himself, Butler was moved to write as he did of his long association with Pauli. "Charles Paine Pauli," that "extraordinary document," as Jones calls it, seems on first perusal to have been written by one whose frankness, fairness, and grievous sense of hurt at once capture the reader's sympathy, if not his understanding. Muggeridge, in noting that the account of the intimacy with Pauli is quite different from anything else Butler wrote, observes, "His pattern for living got laid aside for once; and he came out into the open, was forced into the open because of the intensity of his feelings."<sup>2</sup> Intensity of feeling in the essay there certainly is, but the writing is different, not because Butler has come out into the open but because his bitterness on discovering

<sup>1</sup>Vide ante, 144-145.

<sup>2</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 92.



that Pauli's will made not the slightest recognition of their friendship prompted him to adopt his role of 'Backbiter' and blacken his friend's name by concealment of the true facts, by cunning insinuation, and by fabrication of an incredible tale to "explain" how Pauli might have acquired nine thousand pounds of "solid money."

In preparing the essay for posterity there is no doubt that Butler gauged all the possible reactions of his readers, and that he used all his cunning to present his case in such a way as to lead his readers to the conclusions he wished them to adopt. Samuel Butler was not only a very clever man but one who suffered from that Erewhonian disease, the fear of giving one's self away, and one who was at all times very conscious that in this regard the writer's craft is a dangerous one. In view of both his fears and his special skills, it seems necessary to examine his essay "Charles Paine Pauli" rather closely, for it is obvious that if Butler wished to conceal the whole truth about himself, its concealment could not have been in more capable hands.

Butler's essay about Pauli fails to account satisfactorily for either the attraction Pauli had for him or for the continuation of the quarterly payments after Pauli had been called to the bar. After the first year the two never went out together to concerts or to social gatherings;



they had no mutual friends; they shared no cultural interests; and after Pauli's failure to assist Butler in salvaging something from the collapse of Hoare's companies, Butler came to the conclusion that Pauli was lacking in "backbone" and lost all faith in him as a "superior being." Butler became convinced as early as 1875 that he himself was the stronger of the two. As it appears that Pauli shared neither cultural nor social interests with Butler and was, moreover, deficient in determination and business acumen, it is difficult to understand the nature of his charm. Furthermore, the qualities with which Butler endows Pauli in his essay fail to explain the attraction, for that Pauli displayed indomitable pluck when in physical pain, never betrayed the slightest sign of snobbishness, and never spoke in a manner unworthy of a gentleman <sup>1</sup> can scarcely account for Butler's years of devotion. Nor can the beam be balanced in this apparently one-sided friendship by the fact that Pauli felt some sympathy for Butler in the Darwin quarrel, showed some appreciation of Butler's ability as a writer, and occasionally gave some "very sensible advice" in legal matters.<sup>2</sup> With characteristic generosity, Butler in his essay "Jones and Myself," in

<sup>1</sup> Butler, "Charles Paine Pauli," Butleriana.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, "Charles Paine Pauli," Butleriana.



noting that Jones had nothing whatsoever to do with his first three books, remarks, "All my books from this date onward [Life and Habit] abound with passages, suggested, if not more, by Jones,"<sup>1</sup> yet, although the dedication of Life and Habit hints strongly that Pauli made a similar contribution to the earlier books, nowhere in "Charles Paine Pauli" does Butler give his first friend any credit for literary help or inspiration.

So scanty and meagre are the tributes that Butler makes to Pauli in his essay that he creates an impression of downright falsity. Moreover, the credit that he gives on one page is often taken away on another: Pauli betrayed not the slightest sign of snobbishness, but resented Butler coming to his lodgings or chambers and kept his social affairs and his friends to himself; Pauli gave very sensible legal advice, but failed to see the folly of Hoare's financial schemes or to aid Butler in salvaging one company; and though Butler believed Pauli to be "free enough with his money when he had any," he does not fail to underline the fact that in all the years of lunching at Clifford's Inn Pauli only once tipped a servant. Yet, of this friend whom he paints as selfish, mean, cruel, unscrupulous, and sadly lacking in cultural interests,

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 103.



Butler wrote in 1883, "Pauli shaped me more than any man I have ever known..."<sup>1</sup> This admission, which came to light when Keynes and Hill brought out their edition of the Note-Books in 1951, is strong evidence that the character pictured in "Charles Paine Pauli" is very blurred in outline although the eye of the artist had lost none of its former cunning.

It is when he is making insinuations, however, that Butler most taxes our powers of credulity. Not less than twice does he refer to the probability that had Pauli remained in New Zealand or returned there he would have married Amy, the daughter of the editor of The Press. With a reprehensible lack of good taste Butler implies that Pauli had been philandering with his employer's womenfolk:

She was a very fascinating child, but as yet was only about 14 years old though she looked nearly full grown; it was hard, however, to say whether he was more devoted to the mother or to the daughter.<sup>2</sup>

If Amy were eleven years younger than Pauli, presumably her mother was almost as many years older, and it seems unlikely that a handsome, popular, and charming young man, even in an infant colony, would be hard pressed to find more suitable attachments.

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 109. The italics are mine.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 41.



The thought of Pauli married, however, seemed to stimulate Butler's imagination into making fantastic conjectures. Writing of the time when the payments to Pauli were no longer a financial burden to him, Butler confides to his readers, "What I feared most was that he might have a wife and children of whom I knew nothing; and after having helped him to the end, I might find a family sprung upon me after he was gone..."<sup>1</sup> It is difficult, in view of this surprising statement not to agree with the conjecture of Mr. Muggeridge that, if he were not actually a blackmailer, Pauli had some extraordinary hold over Butler.<sup>2</sup> But again, knowing Butler's powers, one cannot lose sight of the possibility that he may have fully intended his readers to leap to damning conclusions.

If the thought of Pauli with a wife agitated Butler, the thought of him with nine thousand pounds of "solid money" was positive torment. With the frenzy of wild birds suddenly caged, Butler's thoughts dart first in one direction and then in another trying to break through to some explanation that will make his misery less. In the solicitor's office, shocked by the revelations of a will that did not mention Samuel Butler, he asked if it were possible that Pauli had speculated and the solicitor

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 114.



comforted him not at all by answering that it was highly probable. When he comes to give his own ideas "as to the way in which Pauli came to die worth some nine thousand pounds" Butler's agitation betrays him into letting his malice become plainly evident:

I do not believe he speculated, and I greatly doubt whether Ainslie [the solicitor of Pauli's estate] believed it either. He said what he did to throw me off the scent. If Pauli had speculated he would never have left £9,000--he would have lost every penny of it, for he was a complete outsider. I think also that he realised what utter gambling speculation is, and was too shrewd to gamble. I may be wrong, but I do not think I am. If, however, he really did speculate, I feel sure that £9,000 is but the wreck of a much larger sum.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt the recollection of his own financial fiasco in Hoare's companies is what made the idea of Pauli in the role of a successful speculator intolerable to Butler.

In the course of his narrative, Butler spends considerable time describing Pauli's friendship with a wealthy, invalid alcoholic, X, who was attended by two companions, one of whom Pauli suspected to be a blackguard and the other a drunkard. Mr. X "adored Pauli" and made him the sole executor of his estate which proved to be worth some fifty thousand pounds less than had been anticipated. Butler fabricates an ingenious story to explain Pauli's unexpected possession of £9,000. He suggests that Mr. X had wished to leave Pauli something more substantial than

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 89-90.



the two hundred pounds he actually received, but that Pauli had objected to a large legacy on the grounds that he had a friend to whom he owed money, and were Pauli to become wealthy, this friend would expect to be paid back. To cheat the government of inheritance taxes and the friend of repayment, Pauli, Butler imagines, suggested that on security of a note the sum of £10,000 could be transferred in trust to him for investment. As sole executor Pauli could then destroy all evidence of the transaction. After treating his readers to this truly fantastic tale to explain Pauli's surprising wealth, Butler again allows speculation to raise its horrid head:

The only other explanation that I can think of to explain the disappearance of the much larger sum than £10,000 from X's estate is that X speculated with it under Pauli's guidance and lost it--but this I do not believe.<sup>1</sup>

This little paragraph is surely a strange conclusion to a story that set out to explain not how Mr. X lost his money but how Pauli acquired his. So skilfully does Butler convey the information that X's estate was short of a great sum of money and that Pauli was the sole executor that the following statement comes as something of a shock:

I am sure that till I told him the facts he [Ainslie] had no idea that Pauli had been having money from me; but I fear on learning how the case stood, he may think it likely that Pauli was a good deal more

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 93.



able to explain what had become of X's money than he really was.<sup>1</sup>

Butler's immediate protestations of his faith in Pauli do little but underline the damaging insinuation that Pauli was a rogue:

I believe every word of what Pauli told me about X. If money disappeared I have very little doubt it was got hold of by blackmailers. Pauli would never invent such stories. Unscrupulous as he was, he would draw the line at a categoric lie.<sup>2</sup>

Butler almost succeeds in these few sentences in making us believe that when Pauli said he felt sure that X had been blackmailed for years,<sup>3</sup> he spoke with the very best authority. Although it is possible that Pauli may have indeed been a scheming rascal with parasitic tendencies, he should not be so branded on the strength of what has herewith been demonstrated as a malicious essay written by Butler in 1898. Pauli's friends, who read only Jones's account in the Memoir and were thus spared the most damning of the insinuations, were sufficiently aroused more than twenty years after Pauli's death to proclaim publicly that they considered him to be "the soul of honour and uprightness."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 91.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 90.

<sup>4</sup> Edwin Lascelles to The Times Literary Supplement, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 88.



It is difficult to meet all Butler's charges and insinuations, which have led to Pauli's being regarded as one of the most thorough blackguards associated with English literature, but Pauli's very old friend Sam Bircham may have been correct in thinking that there must have been an explanation.<sup>1</sup> It is just possible that Pauli's reticence about his earnings at the bar may have stemmed from tact. A Butler who was facing failure after failure in both art and literature would little relish the success of his protégé. Again, Butler's charge that, except for a brief period of lionhood following the publication of Erewhon, he did not meet Pauli's friends can easily be explained by traits in Butler's character. Jealousy can be plainly seen in Butler's references to Pauli's very wealthy friend, Charles Swinburne, who supplied the champagne, grapes, and valet for Pauli's last days, and, according to Butler's surmise, even the special train to carry the mourners to the costly funeral. And another of Butler's characteristics which may explain Pauli's behaviour comes to light in a letter to Miss Savage which very possibly refers to Pauli and the Swinburnes:

...I was engaged to some people of the name of X who were cottoning on to me, and whom I do not like. They are very rich, and want me to go down into the country with them, and when I would not they sent a

<sup>1</sup> See A. T. Bartholomew's prefatory note to "Charles Paine Pauli," Butleriana, 37.



man-servant with a beautiful narcissus, growing, and in full bloom, and are generally boring me--and I have to go to them tonight. I shall tell the man who let me in for them to take them away. There ought to be some form of social separation as simple and void of offence as introduction.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the anti-social attitude shown in this letter, Pauli's behaviour in sparing his friends from meetings with Butler seems quite understandable.

Again, Butler's charge that Pauli gave him little assistance, if any, in the management of his property may be equally unfair. Butler asserts that when his investment in small house property led him to begin keeping accounts Pauli insisted that the sums paid to himself be listed as superintendence, but remarks that after the first three months Pauli made no attempt to manage the property.<sup>2</sup> Very likely Butler's claim here is almost true, but, again, Pauli's behaviour is at least partly explained by the fact that Butler rescued Jones from financial distress by giving him what appears to have been the management of the same holdings.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it should be remembered that Butler's friendship with Jones began shortly after Butler returned from Canada in 1875 and discovered he had lost all faith in Pauli as a "superior being." And

<sup>1</sup>Butler to Miss Savage, 1877, Letters, 141.

<sup>2</sup>Jones's comment that he frequently saw Pauli on business (Memoir, I, 312) suggests that Butler had perhaps been forgetful.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, Butleriana. Cf. "Charles Paine Pauli," 68, and "Jones and Myself," 113.



according to Butler's testimony in his essay "Jones and Myself," long before 1881 (the time of Butler's investment in property) Jones had supplanted Pauli in Butler's affections, for he writes:

It was not till the end of 1878 that we quite ceased to be afraid of one another, and found out how much better we got on with one another than with any one else.<sup>1</sup>

As Pauli would have nothing to do with Jones socially it is extremely probable that he was hurt by Butler's infatuation with the younger man and resented Butler's action in asking Jones to manage the property that had already been his own concern.

Although it cannot be proven that Pauli earned all the money that Butler paid him, it is reasonable to suppose, in view of the dedication of Life and Habit in 1877, that he made a considerable contribution to at least the first three books, and very likely served as a sounding board for the ideas in many of the others, for Butler comments upon the luncheon meetings thus: "I talked freely about any subject that interested me; all conversation between us was perfectly friendly and genial..."<sup>2</sup> In the case of Jones, there is no doubt at all that he received an allowance for services rendered, and yet Butler's attitude

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 108.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 68.



to both friends shows a curious parallel when he comes to look back upon his life. Much to the annoyance of Mrs. Jones, Butler persuaded her son to abandon his post as managing clerk in the office of Sir Thomas Paine to assist him with his books and music in exchange for an allowance equal to the salary Jones had been receiving.<sup>1</sup> Jones was for a time actually poorer by a hundred pounds a year as his mother immediately expressed her disapproval of Butler's plan by discontinuing the allowance she had paid her son. Yet, in spite of thus having completely ruined Jones's chance of becoming a successful solicitor, and of receiving thirteen years of service from him, Butler wrote, "I have made Jones promise that the money I have given him shall all be refunded to my nephew. I do not intend to have a second Pauli."<sup>2</sup> Under the circumstances, as the £200 Butler paid his companion merely replaced the salary that Jones had earned as solicitor, Butler's use of the word "given" is peculiar, but it certainly throws considerable light on his attitude to Pauli. If Butler could reward Jones for his long years of dancing attendance at

<sup>1</sup>Of his plan Butler wrote to Mrs. Jones: "The proposal is one which in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred should be immediately rejected, but I venture to submit that in the present case it ought not to be so." Quoted in Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 136.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 153. (Jones's version of the same story allows us to retain our impression that Butler was a gentleman, as he says that when he offered to pay back the money Butler would not hear of it. Jones's will, however, directed his executors to pay the sum to Butler or to his estate. See Memoir, II, 326-327.)



home and abroad with such a mean and miserly demand, it is extremely probable that his memory suffered a serious lapse in regard to the help he had received from Pauli.

In his essay Butler observes with evidence of disenchantment:

As I look back on some of the sayings and doings of his that I have put down in my earlier books of Notes, I see them with different eyes to those with which I wrote them, but I have left them as I found them; there they fell, there let them lie.<sup>1</sup>

Jones, too, apparently decided to let them lie, for, apart from two mediocre anecdotes from which we gather Pauli was a harmless, if not very humorous prankster, there is little in the Memoir about Pauli that is not taken from Butler's essay. Although one cannot expect Jones personally to have shown any warmth for Pauli, it seems regrettable that in the role of an especially well-informed biographer he did not elaborate a little on Butler's mysterious friendship. It was Jones, it must be remembered, who was responsible for the preservation of "Charles Paine Pauli," for it was he who advised Butler to keep the infamous essay, and it was Jones who supplied Bartholomew with the perfect sub-heading, a maxim from La Rochefoucauld: Il est plus honteux de se défier de ses amis que d'en être trompé. Indisputably, Jones is merely an echo of Butler,

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 58.



and an echo contained within the walls of jealousy is apt to have a hollow sound. For example, when Jones was advised in 1879 to seek his fortune as a solicitor in Shanghai, Butler sent him to obtain the counsel of Pauli as "a man of the world." Jones's comment shows that, although he was always ready to humor Butler, he did not share his friend's high opinion of Charles Paine Pauli: "I called on him in his chambers and did not go to Shanghai, probably less in consequence of Pauli's advice than because I had no intention of going there."<sup>1</sup> Jones's envy of the intimacy which had existed between Butler and Pauli for so many years betrays him into making an obviously absurd statement about Pauli in connection with The Way of All Flesh. Jones relates that Towneley was drawn from what Butler had persuaded himself was Pauli's character, but goes on to insist:

The particular incident of Towneley's visit to Miss Snow was drawn from Butler himself, not from Pauli. Butler never was on sufficiently intimate terms with Pauli to be able to take any such incident from him.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of some five thousand luncheons alone, one would suspect that two humorists like Butler and Pauli would have established sufficient rapport to warrant such a confidence.

Jones' very frank comment on the manner in which he

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, 312.

<sup>2</sup>Jones, Memoir, II, 8.



handled the biographical material left by Butler explains a great deal:

I should have been glad if I could always have used his words, but, this not being possible, I was compelled to condense, to amplify, to omit, and sometimes to re-state entirely in language of my own.<sup>1</sup>

One feels that Pauli, in particular, may have suffered from Jones's editorial zeal. For example, in Keynes and Hill's edition of the Note-Books the following informative note occurs:

So Jones, Gogin, my cousin Reginald and Pauli are all men of more insight, quicker wit, more playful fancy, and in all ways, abler men than I am, but you will find ten of them for one of me. I note what they say, think it over, adapt it and give it permanent form. They throw good things off as sparks; I collect them and turn them into warmth. But I could not do this if I did not sometimes throw out a spark or two myself.<sup>2</sup>

This passage in Jones's version of the Note-Books is contained within a much longer note. Whereas the re-writing may have been done by Butler, one is rather suspicious that Jones's pen has been at work for the passage is robbed of much of its interest as the phrase "my most intimate friends" has been substituted for the specific names. And Keynes and Hill are responsible for another interesting restoration which I have already quoted. In the Memoir Jones quotes Butler's sincere tribute to Handel which

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, I, Preface, ix.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 223.



begins, "Of all dead men Handel has had the largest place in my thoughts."<sup>1</sup> The passage reveals the intense hold the composer had over Butler's imagination, but again the note has been robbed of half its interest and much of its significance by the deletion of its opening clause, "Pauli shaped me more than any man I have ever known."<sup>2</sup> It took half a century for these two passages to be restored to the form in which Butler wrote them, and many writers who have written about Butler during that time, therefore, have been denied two significant admissions which might have greatly modified their interpretations of Butler's personality.

Jones's lack of candor about Pauli and his careful concealment of the estrangement which developed latterly between himself and Butler are sufficient indication that, on the subject of Butler's friendships, Jones's Memoir and his edition of the Note-Books are not illuminating, and, at times, deliberately misleading. Butler's mysterious sonnet, "An Academic Exercise," which begins, "We were two lovers standing sadly by/ While our two loves lay dead upon the ground...",<sup>3</sup> is usually thought to have specific reference to Butler's estrangement from Pauli, but Muggeridge

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 37.

<sup>2</sup>Vide ante, 201.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix D.



believes that the poem refers to Jones.<sup>1</sup> Muggeridge's sole supporting point, that the sonnet was written some years after Pauli's death, is, as Henderson points out, extremely weak as of course the sonnets to Miss Savage were written long after 1885.<sup>2</sup> Strong support for Muggeridge's view, however, is to be found in the prefatory note that Jones wrote to accompany the sonnet when it first appeared in 1912 in his edition of the Note-Books. Jones states that he believes Butler was depressed by "editing his remains," and suggests that Butler found among his letters "something which awakened memories of a friendship of his earlier life."<sup>3</sup> Jones's hint, of course, points to Pauli, but it was not Pauli's letters that Butler was editing, for these had all been returned many years earlier. Nor is it likely that the sonnet-inspiring "something" was Butler's essay about Pauli, for that had been written but a few years earlier. If Jones is correct in assuming that it was something from his correspondence that inspired Butler to write about false love, the letters were very likely Jones's own. Just three days before he wrote "An Academic Exercise," Butler had written to Miss

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 152.

<sup>2</sup>Henderson, Samuel Butler, 223.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 381-382.



Lilian Jones, who was nursing her brother through pneumonia, the following innocent-looking little note:

I have edited several of your brother's 1883 letters from Venice, Padua, and Verona; if he has any of mine, and if they contain as much treasonable matter as his to me, I trust he will allow me, when he gets better, to edit them by writing over those parts that give my true opinion concerning those most near and dear to me...<sup>1</sup>

Butler is in effect reminding Jones (and Miss Jones) of other days when he, too, indulged in enlivening his letters to Butler with what the latter called "treasonable parricidal vileness."<sup>2</sup> That Butler could be so ungentlemanly as to embarrass a sick friend in such a spiteful manner, indicates how deeply hurt he had been by Jones's defection. Re-reading the letter<sup>3</sup> Jones had written from Italy in 1883--when Jones was still a true disciple--doubtless intensified Butler's present loneliness and his resentment of Jones's reconciliation with his family.<sup>3</sup>

Again, Muggeridge's view, that the friendship with Jones is the subject of "An Academic Exercise," is supported by Jones's statement that he had no recollection of having seen the sonnet. Had the poem been about Pauli, not even double pneumonia would have saved Jones from hearing it,

<sup>1</sup>Butler to Lilian Jones, January 9, 1902, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 363.

<sup>2</sup>Butler to Jones, 1883, quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 395.

<sup>3</sup>Muggeridge shows that Jones's manner to Butler underwent an abrupt change in 1900 when Jones's mother's death left him financially independent. See The Earnest Atheist, 151.



for Butler was writing entertaining budgets every few days to Miss Jones, who would not permit Butler to see her brother, and no piece of news or gossip could have been designed to cheer the patient more than a sonnet dealing with the death throes of Butler's friendship with Pauli. It is apparent that Butler never discussed the poem with Jones for the simple reason that it dealt not with an estrangement out of the past, but with one that was causing him anguish on the day of its composition, January 12, 1902.

Conclusive proof that the rift between Jones and Butler was a wide one is found in the fact that just five months later, two weeks before he died, Butler could bring himself to write thus about his great friend to a mutual and ancient enemy, his sister Harriet: "I have left Jones, with whom I have made up all estrangement, £500. We are now as good friends as ever."<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly Butler is lying, but the statement is doubly interesting as it reveals the fact that Butler was anxious to make people believe that he and Jones were still good friends, just as a few years earlier his note to Jones on Pauli's death betrays a similar desire: "All I should have wished to do would be to attend the funeral to do away with the supposition that

<sup>1</sup> Butler to his sister Harriet, June 4, 1902, quoted in Henderson, Samuel Butler, 233.



there was any estrangement between us and as the only fitting termination of so close an intimacy..."<sup>1</sup>

Under the heading "Jones's Conscience" Butler once wrote, "He said he had not much conscience, and what little he had was guilty."<sup>2</sup> One cannot be sure whether the quip in the second clause was added by Jones or by Butler, but it is apparent that Jones had no conscience whatsoever when he edited Pauli out of the Note-Books, and that the little he had when he dealt with Butler's friendships in the Memoir must have indeed suffered not a few guilty twinges.

Butler's long association with Pauli and his extraordinarily close friendship with Jones are marked by striking parallels. In each case the friend suffered from ill-health, helped him with his books and property, and visited him daily. If Pauli shaped Butler, Butler undoubtedly shaped Jones by cultivating his taste in literature, art, and music; by sharpening his sense of humor; and by influencing his beliefs and even his habits. Again, each friend was persuaded to accept an allowance of two hundred pounds: in Pauli's case, one would suspect, partly to annoy the Canon; and in Jones's, to vex his mother who

<sup>1</sup> Butler to Jones, December 30, 1897, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 284.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 219.



apparently took the place of Butler's father as a target for spiteful darts.<sup>1</sup> Both allowances were regretted by an aged Butler who forgot past services, even as both friendships were marred by mysterious estrangements which Butler wished to conceal. In each case, I believe, Butler tried to monopolize his friend by attempting to control his other friendships. Pauli's friends he made the mistake of rejecting, but with Jones's he went to the other extreme and pursued Hans Faesch with an ardor that startles the staunchest Butlerian, as in the sentimental tributes to that young German the reader is faced with two alternatives, neither of them pleasant: concluding either that Butler in his sixties reached emotional senility, or that Butler wished posterity to entertain a grave suspicion that he was a homosexual.

That Butler was conscious that a damaging interpretation might be placed upon the financial help he gave to Pauli is evident from the indignation he expressed to his father in the confidential letter of 1879,<sup>2</sup> and from the consternation he betrayed upon learning the amount of Pauli's estate. The revelations of Pauli's will prompted Butler to

<sup>1</sup>"It must depress you very much being with that awful woman your mother, especially after having been so long with me," Butler to Jones, quoted in Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 151.

<sup>2</sup>Vide ante, 194.



take a most peculiar step. Butler had agreed with the lawyer that no mention would be made of the allowance Pauli had received for thirty years, as Pauli's wealthy friends would be greatly shocked. However, he suddenly realized that his magnaminity in this regard would not protect the character of Samuel Butler:

After I had left him [Ainslie, the solicitor] I remembered that there were several people who knew that Pauli was to the end of his life in receipt of a considerable yearly sum from me, and wrote urging Ainslie to do his utmost to keep the value of Pauli's estate from getting into the papers.<sup>1</sup>

Had the will been published, it was the friends of Samuel Butler who might have suffered some sense of shock. Again, according to evidence unearthed by Muggeridge, the trial of Oscar Wilde was the event that led Butler to retrieve from his literary agent the poem to Hans Faesch which it had been Butler's earnest wish to publish anonymously, as he was convinced that it was the best thing he had ever written. Yet, in spite of these proofs of evident concern for what his contemporaries might think of him, Butler seems to have been anxious to create an impression among posterity that in at least one regard Samuel Butler could claim to be in the company of Plato, Michelangelo, Tchaikovsky, and Shakespeare.

As Butler was provoked by the scholars' failure either

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 89.



to commend or condemn the results of the careful research he had done on Shakespeare's sonnets, it is possible that he deliberately decided to leave a similar riddle among his own papers to mystify posterity. Butler's life certainly seems to have been marked by those psychological factors that produce the homosexual. And, although Dr. West says that there is no such thing as a "characteristic homosexual type,"<sup>1</sup> Butler's exaggerated animosity for his father, his almost perpetual sense of injury or of being someone's victim, his fear of women, his immediate disapproval when any friend contemplated marriage, his long, subsidized friendships (one with a man many years his junior), his acute sense of guilt over his treatment of William Sefton Moorhouse<sup>2</sup> and of Miss Savage,<sup>3</sup> his careful observance of convention even to the extent of contributing to the

<sup>1</sup>"Although there is no such thing as a characteristic homosexual type, either of physique or temperament, nevertheless certain traits appear with particular frequency among homosexuals. Some of these traits doubtless arise from the same psychological factors as have initially been responsible for turning the individual away from normal outlets; others may be the direct consequence of the difficult, secretive life a homosexual has to lead. The most important trait, certainly the one most noticeable to a psychiatrist, is the pronounced sense of guilt and shame. It manifests in various ways." West, Homosexuality, 47.

<sup>2</sup>In commenting on withdrawing his money from New Zealand, Butler writes in a strangely agitated fashion: "All this is a story that haunts me and will haunt me to my dying day.... If it was a trespass to call in the money, may I be forgiven, as from the bottom of my heart I forgive Pauli, for whose sake I did it.... it makes me sick to think of it." See Butleriana, 51.

<sup>3</sup>Of Miss Savage he writes: "Therefore she haunts me, and always will haunt, because I never felt for her the love that if I had been a better man I should have felt." See Letters, 363.



support of Madame Dumas in Handel Street, and his unpardonable sonnets to explain his lack of passion for Miss Savage and thereby to create an impression of normality, all contribute to a suspicion that Samuel Butler showed many traits of the homosexual. And there are his books. In spite of living in an era when the very word could not be mentioned even in a court of law, Butler manages to introduce the subject of homosexuality into his books fairly frequently. However, it should be pointed out that the passages hinting, with perhaps what is a Buffonian type of irony, at immoral relationships between men may have been added very late in Butler's life after he had written Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered. The case of the steak-eating Erewhonian young man, "cursed with more conscience than brains," who hung himself rather than face the consequences of being caught coming out of a den with half a shoulder of mutton,<sup>1</sup> which has surprisingly been described by one biographer as a "simple enough parable of sex,"<sup>2</sup> was certainly added to the revised edition of 1901. Again, there is a possibility that the character of Pryer in The Way of All Flesh suffered late modifications. Because Butler made a note on one of Miss Savage's letters in 1902 stating that he had not looked at The Way of All Flesh since getting it back from her in

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Erewhon, 252-254.

<sup>2</sup>Stillman, Samuel Butler, 92. The italics are mine.



1884, it is generally supposed that it was not revised after her death, but Muggeridge states that the novel was revised in the last year or so of Butler's life.<sup>1</sup> If Muggeridge is right, it is possible that the character of Pryer was made more unpleasant at a later date, as there is no recorded comment of Miss Savage who, after all, did not hesitate to tell Butler that the character of Towneley had to be "toned down" as he was "a coarse creature with vicious propensities."<sup>2</sup> Jones comments that the character of Pryer was not drawn from anyone and that he was merely wanted so that Ernest might lose his money,<sup>3</sup> but into the mouth of Pryer, along with Butlerian comments on the Bible, Butler puts some of his favorite philosophy:

...no practice is entirely vicious which has not been extinguished among the comeliest, most vigorous, and most cultivated races of mankind in spite of centuries of endeavor to extirpate it. If a vice in spite of such efforts can still hold its own among the most polished nations, it must be founded on some immutable truth or fact in human nature, and must have some compensatory advantage which we cannot afford altogether to dispense with.<sup>4</sup>

Although Butler had much earlier expressed this view or one similar to it in both his Note-Books and Life and Habit, the plea for greater human understanding, when dissociated

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 227.

<sup>2</sup>Miss Savage to Butler, 1883, Letters, 301.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, Memoir, II, 11.

<sup>4</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 229. Cf. Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 26-30, and Life and Habit, 52.



from the sliding-eyed Mr. Pryer, was vague and generalized, and therefore lacking in impact. Now, however, there can be little doubt that Butler is referring to homosexuality and is suggesting some revision of the moral code.

Without access to the original manuscript of The Way of All Flesh, it of course cannot be determined whether or not Pryer's hinted abnormality was an addition made during the last revision, but there is no doubt at all that the hints of some abnormality in Butler himself become increasingly frequent in material he wrote in 1895 and later. The rather extravagant expressions of affection contained in the letters to Hans Faesch,<sup>1</sup> the enigmatic passage in the essay "Charles Paine Pauli,"<sup>2</sup> and the lachrymose sentiments described in his sonnet on the death of false love (mystifyingly linked with Shakespearian criticism by its title "An Academic Exercise"), all strongly suggest that Butler, to use a phrase he himself employed in describing Shakespeare's love for Mr. W. H. was, of certain men, "fonder than he should have been."<sup>3</sup>

Jones suggests that Butler first became interested

<sup>1</sup>As Muggeridge makes a comment on a note attached to a pressed copy of one of the letters it seems that Butler thought them worth preserving.

<sup>2</sup>Vide ante, 189-190.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, in a note entitled "Myself and Dr. Furnivall," December 8, 1899, quoted in Jones, Memoir, II, 310-314.



in puzzling over the Sonnets in 1895,<sup>1</sup> which, of course, was also the year of the Wilde trial and the year of Butler's letters to Faesch. As Butler's own sonnet-writing began after he had committed all one hundred fifty-four of Shakespeare's to memory, it is not surprising that the content as well as the form of "An Academic Exercise" should follow Shakespeare's pattern.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Stillman and others have noted the close connection between Butler's Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered and the Pauli essay. It cannot be doubted that Butler was aware that he was imitating Shakespeare when he wrote "An Academic Exercise," and I believe that the similarities that mark the essay and the book were no less consciously executed.

For Muggeridge the Butler-Pauli relationship provided a fascinating field of conjecture, and the climax of his attack on Butler in The Earnest Atheist comes in a chapter that he scathingly entitles "Nice Person" in which he draws a damning parallel between Butler's analysis of Shakespeare's association with Mr. W. H. in Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered and Butler's account of his friendship with Pauli. "Pauli's charm in the eyes of Butler and the others who were good enough to supplement his income,"

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, II, 231.

<sup>2</sup>See Jones's comment in The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 382.



Muggeridge declares, "was unquestionably physical."<sup>1</sup> The fervor with which Butler defends Shakespeare on the grounds of his extreme youth, his ardent temperament, his single offence, his provocation, and bitter remorse leads Muggeridge to comment, "The probability is that it was not so much Shakespeare Butler was justifying as himself."<sup>2</sup> Muggeridge is very shrewd, for undeniably, Butler had Pauli as well as homosexuality in his mind when he wrote Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered. Again it would seem that Muggeridge is correct in assuming that Pauli had some sort of hold over Butler: "It might have been blackmail; or it might have been, not exactly blackmail, but a feeling that he had so exposed his vulnerability to Pauli that it was safer, as long as the price was not too high, to keep on friendly terms with him."<sup>3</sup> Muggeridge strengthens his case by noting the similarity of ideas in the book and in the essay, and by pointing out an indisputable reference to Pauli in Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered. He adds, "The very phrase about 'passing scatheless through the ambush of young days,' that Butler uses in his own *apologia*, he used also in Shakespeare's."<sup>4</sup> The phrase, "the ambush

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 103.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 126-127.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 128.



"of young days" is, of course, from Sonnet 70, and it is not surprising that Butler employs it in his discussion of Shakespeare's relationship with Mr. W. H., but its use in the essay implants the suspicion that Butler deliberately intended that posterity should begin drawing parallels and jumping to conclusions that are perhaps very far from the truth.

Indeed, Muggeridge could have pursued the similarity of phrasing much further: of Shakespeare's relationship with Mr. W. H., Butler says, "I grant that the story is a very squalid one,"<sup>1</sup> while his own account of his friendship with Pauli he sums up as "this squalid, miserable story;"<sup>2</sup> Butler refers to Shakespeare's indiscretion as a "severe wound in youth,"<sup>3</sup> and in his own narrative we find him exclaiming, "The main desire of my life was to conceal how severely I had been wounded;"<sup>4</sup> a stage in Shakespeare's love for his friend is described as "the white heat of infatuation,"<sup>5</sup> while Butler's love for Pauli is "a white heat of devotion;"<sup>6</sup> and while Shakespeare, "ever sanguine,"

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, 113.  
<sup>2</sup> Cf. Butleriana, 93.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, 112.  
<sup>4</sup> Cf. Butleriana, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Butler, Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, 123.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 93.



might look hopefully for a permanent reconciliation,<sup>1</sup> Butler's own "sanguine temperament" enabled him to forget past wrongs and place his hopes on a ripening intimacy with Jones.<sup>2</sup> It might be argued that the similarity of phrasing was accidental as his mind was already occupied with the riddle of the Sonnets at the time when he wrote "Charles Paine Pauli," but, besides the clear reference--noted by Muggeridge--to Pauli in Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered the occasional comment such as "and many another man has loved as fondly and foolishly as he did"<sup>3</sup> shows that the thought of Pauli was constantly with him when he pieced together his version of the story hidden in the Sonnets. Indeed, it is quite impossible to believe that so ardent a student of textual differences as Butler could have used so many similar phrases by chance.

The question immediately arises, however, what was Butler's purpose in making references to a personal friendship within the framework of a piece of scholarly research? It must be remembered that Butler's writing was always personal; it was a manifestation of his egotism. Moreover, the essay in which he had indulged his propensity for backbiting could not be published in his own life-time. The

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, 109.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Butleriana, 59.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, 107.



book on the Sonnets, on the other hand, was to appear within less than two years after Pauli's death, and, though few besides Jones would catch the allusions to Pauli, the very act of recording references to his own suffering while discussing Shakespeare's was the only means Butler had at his command to assuage the pain which the revelations of Pauli's will had inflicted on him. And then, if at some future date textual similarities between his book and his essay were noted and inferences were made that Charles Paine Pauli was the Mr. W. H. in the life of Samuel Butler, it would be no more than the treacherous fellow deserved. However, it would seem that in strewing clues so liberally Butler has made the path of the researcher altogether too clear.

Perspicacity cannot be denied Mr. Muggeridge, and he has made a very strong case for his conjectures, but re-examination of some of his points will show that Pauli has been painted more blackly than he deserves. In the first instance, Butler makes it quite clear that his particular "ambush of young days" occurred long before he met Pauli. Again, Muggeridge's suggestion that Butler's fervor in excusing Shakespeare on the grounds of extreme youth reveals a wish for personal justification will not obtain if Pauli is the villain as Butler was already



twenty-seven when they met. Too, Butler's insistence that Shakespeare's weakness was limited to one instance and that his guilt never went beyond intention leads Muggeridge into making the very unlikely surmise (in view of the tributes Pauli's wealthy friends paid to his memory) that Pauli, like Mr. W. H., may have set a similar compromising trap for each of his patrons.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Muggeridge's conjecture that Pauli had some hold over Butler is very likely the truth, for some ever-present dread must have compelled him into allowing Pauli to eat up all his capital, and been responsible for stimulating Butler's imagination into considering the possibility of ever-continuing tribute to an unknown Mrs. Pauli and her children.

There is some evidence that Butler had a brush with homosexuality in his youth. It will be remembered that in The Way of All Flesh when the probing parents "were on the point of reaching subjects more delicate than they had yet touched upon," Ernest escaped all further revelations when his "unconscious self took the matter up and made a resistance to which his conscious self was unequal, by tumbling him off his chair in a fit of fainting."<sup>2</sup> Butler's reference to being "severely wounded" in his youth implies

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 126.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 180.



that some incident took place that shocked him profoundly. Perhaps Canon Butler's dread of what might happen to his son's morals at an art school was not altogether unfounded. There are fragments of evidence in Butler's Note-Books in his denunciation of parents or those in charge of the young who fail to give any guidance or instruction whatsoever in sexual matters,<sup>1</sup> in his references to the uncertainties of boyhood, and in his note on his own virtuous life:

I have led a more virtuous life than I intended, or thought I was leading. When I was young I thought I was vicious: now I know that I was not and that my unconscious knowledge was sounder than my conscious.<sup>2</sup>

Again, his bitterness and revulsion are evident in a passage which he wrote while still at Cambridge:

It is also strictly forbidden by this society's laws to form a firm friendship grounded upon esteem and a perception of great and good qualities in the object of one's liking, for this kind of friendship lasts a long time--nay, for life; but each member must have a furious and passionate running after his friend for the time being, insomuch that he could never part for an instant from him.... The stroking of the hair and affectionate embracings are much recommended, for they are so manly.<sup>3</sup>

I believe that when Pauli first befriended Butler in New Zealand it was not only Butler's sense of religious guilt that he relieved. Butler's enigmatic passage in the

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 30-31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, A First Year, 33.



Pauli essay strongly suggests that he was deeply troubled by a feeling of moral guilt. My conjecture is that he took Pauli into his confidence by making admissions that he later had cause to regret. Pauli, I feel convinced, reassured him by making light of his youthful indiscretions and thereby gained Butler's devotion. The measure of Butler's gratitude is indicated plainly by the fact that he bought Pauli's passage home and promised to lend him money for three years. His spirit was freed from the awful weight of guilt and he embarked upon the joys of chastising society for its follies by writing Erewhon. Later, it is evident that Butler found the weight of a sense of guilt had been replaced by an equally heavy burden of fear that remained with him until Pauli's death. In his essay Butler observes:

Not that he liked me--it is plain he never did so--but he respected me, and feared me. He must have feared things coming round to me. He would never have known what I might not say about him.<sup>1</sup>

But that the fear of revelations was all on Butler's side is confirmed by the statement made to Muggeridge by Alfred Cathie concerning his master's regard for Pauli, "He seemed to be afraid of him, never to be able to bring himself to hurt his feelings."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Butleriana, 94.

<sup>2</sup>Muggeridge, The Earnest Atheist, 169.



The indications that Butler feared that Pauli might choose to reveal information of a damaging nature are very strong. When Butler was overwhelmed by being offered friendship by a "superior being" in New Zealand it is quite probable that his gratitude would prompt him to lend considerable financial assistance to his new friend, but that gratitude or even great affection should lead a young man to make a will in favor of someone he had known but a few months is very unlikely. I suggest that the will was drawn up to ensure that the friendship would continue, for no one knew better than Samuel Butler the controlling force of a favorable will. Certainly, it was neither gratitude nor affection that prompted Butler to provide for Pauli in his later will, for, according to the testimony of the essay, Butler had become convinced that the "intimacy was superficial" and that Pauli was treating him "iniquitously." That his own much documented affection and pity for Pauli had also become a mere sham is proven by Butler's failure (after years of denying himself small comforts in order to support Pauli's more expensive tastes) on becoming a comparatively wealthy man, to increase Pauli's allowance by one penny. Moreover, in the essay Butler reveals two seemingly absurd fears: first, that Pauli would expect more money after he received his inheritance, and second, that Pauli might leave a wife and children for him to support. The absurdity of these fears is a reliable



indication that Pauli was in a position to extort money from Butler. That Pauli never asked for a penny and made no move to have the allowance increased when Butler became wealthy is adequate proof that Pauli was neither a parasite nor a blackmailer. It is quite possible that for his own peace of mind Butler insisted on paying the two hundred pounds a year, and more than likely that Pauli believed he earned the money, not by keeping Butler's confidences but by serving as a literary and legal advisor to a man of letters. After all, he was the man who shaped Samuel Butler.

Unquestionably, it was the exaggerated importance that Butler attached to money that had much to do with his estrangement from each friend. It seems likely that had Pauli died without a penny there would have been no malicious essay, and had Jones, upon the death of his mother, not become independent "An Academic Exercise" would never have been written. What Butler had, he had given generously enough without much thought, I believe, of repayment, but when as a dying man he wished to leave a handsome inheritance to his nephew (in whom he seems to have had little previous interest) he was smitten by bitter thoughts of the sums of money he had expended on ungrateful friends. Butler's own experience with his father should have been sufficient warning that money had no power to purchase either loyalty or affection.



Although Butler appears to have bought the friendship of both Jones and Pauli there was one friend to whom he gave no money at all. Indeed, he seems to have given her very little. There was the celebrated handful of cherries that launched the friendship when one day, as he stood happily munching in Berners Street, he silently proffered his basket to a fellow art student who scooped up a handful and, without a single word, passed on. The words that subsequently passed between them were for the most part put on paper--hers on little scraps and pieces that caused him endless trouble in recopying when he came to prepare the correspondence for publication. Then there was the stick (which probably cost him only some whittling on a country ramble) he gave her to aid her halting walk, for only Miss Savage's scream of "Murder!" saved the stick from being sawn into a perch for the parrot by young Julius Bertram when she was visiting at Primrose Hill. Too, Butler gave her an occasional sketch as she was genuinely interested in his painting; and the first copy of every book as it came from the press was reserved for Miss Savage to whom he submitted each of his manuscripts for criticism and correction. And there were a good many cups of tea, but she could not, as Pauli and Jones did, call on him every day, for Butler's invitations to Miss Savage not only named the hour and the day but also frequently contained



a broad hint as to a suitable time for departure.<sup>1</sup> However, she was not underprivileged. She heard by post of his aches and ailments, of the shameful treatment he received from his family, of his financial worries, of the rejections of his artistic and literary works, of the villainy of Charles Darwin, and, most regularly, of the abuses or neglect of the critics. To him her letters sped back with kind enquiries for the particular ache or pain, sympathy for his sufferings, scorn for his enemies, skilful flattery for his spirit, enthusiasm for his literary plans, homely hints on effective means of parricide, and the constant coaxing that finally produced The Way of All Flesh. She gave what he himself possessed in no little measure, but what he also desperately needed from someone else--faith in his genius. And, finally, to her memory Butler gave three sadistic sonnets.

Biographers are very sympathetic in their treatment of Miss Savage. She is pictured as a poor, plain, lame, and lonely ex-governess seeking an outlet for her warm affection and energies in helping to run various women's clubs and charitable enterprises. Her poverty, plainness,

<sup>1</sup>Muggeridge observes, "...he liked her flattery and appreciation of his work, and in return for this was prepared to let her pay him a visit occasionally, telling her very particularly not to come before such a time, making it clear when he wanted her to go..." See The Earnest Atheist, 179.



and loneliness, however, appear to have been over-emphasized. Her father, who was an architect, certainly employed at least one servant, and there are references to holidays in France. Miss Savage's familiarity with French and Spanish suggests that she had spent considerable time abroad. In her photograph she does not appear to be particularly plain and she is much more pleasant to look upon than Butler's grim-faced female relations. Lonely she certainly was not. There were friends of both sexes who sought both her advice and her company. There are many references to "my friend Mr. Bertram," a widower who lived at Primrose Hill where she was "made much of." Butler, even with a promise of the plan for his novel, could not lure her to tea when she was visiting the Bertrams. The photograph of Miss Savage, it is interesting to note, that graces Letters between Samuel Butler and Miss Savage was not found among the sacred relics in Clifford's Inn, but was produced by Julius Bertram who was stirred by her letters in the Memoir to search for a photograph of his father's friend. A woman who delighted in "doing nothing" because she "did it so well" is not likely to have suffered much from loneliness.

Writers seem generally agreed that Miss Savage was in love with Butler, but that he assuredly was not in love with her. Butler was a little fearful that the correspondence



might be misinterpreted, for he writes, "It may almost appear as though I had been in love with her..."<sup>1</sup> But he was not. After tea at Clifford's Inn Miss Savage would limp home through the dusk with only Butler's stick to aid her. Although he knew that she was ill one winter evening it did not occur to Butler to escort her through the darkening streets. Indeed, he had no thought of her until he read next day in the papers of the damage done to Waterloo Bridge in the fog. Promptly she reassured him:

Dear Mr. Butler,

Thanks for your kind enquiries. You will be glad to hear that I did no damage to anybody or anything, on my way home last Saturday. It was not I, as you seem to imply, who knocked that great piece out of Waterloo Bridge.<sup>2</sup>

It seems unlikely that Miss Savage had any matrimonial designs upon Butler as was his confident assumption. When she died Jones asked Butler if he had ever proposed to her, and Butler replied that he had not. It is just possible that he did. Early in their friendship when he told her that he burned her letters some incident occurred that vexed her, for years later, when he regretted having burned her letters, she wrote him:

You are mistaken when you talk about my being hurt when you told me you burned my letters. On the

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Jones, Memoir, I, 443.

<sup>2</sup>Miss Savage to Butler, 1882, Letters, 271.



contrary I felt relieved, and I am sure you can have only a very hazy recollection of the matter, or you would not have recalled a very unpleasant moment of my existence.<sup>1</sup>

Butler's note states that he is completely puzzled by the allusion, but it has been shown repeatedly that at times his memory had convenient lapses when his vanity had been injured. Nothing would have distressed Miss Savage more than having to tell Butler that she could not marry him, and of course, nothing could have been more wounding to his ego. Such a rejection would do much to explain the pains Butler took years later, when editing the correspondence, to create the impression that Miss Savage was desperately in love with him; and only deep malice can explain the fact that all decency left him when the despicable and distasteful sonnets about the "too impossible she" oozed from his mind.

Certainly, as early as 1875 Miss Savage had learned to live without even Butler's letters. When he was in Canada he was engaged in a "voluminous" correspondence with Pauli. Miss Savage's letters were neglected, and for a time no letters came from her because she had lost his address. Even a Samuel Butler ought to have known that it is unusual for a lady in love to lose the address of the beloved and not take some appropriate steps, but he

<sup>1</sup>Miss Savage to Butler, 1877, Letters, 156.



convinced himself when he again returned to Canada, after a flying visit to England, that she was punishing him when month after month passed without a single word. He wrote in September; he wrote in October; he wrote in November. In December he returned to England and stormed, "How is it that I have never heard from you? Pray let me do so at once."<sup>1</sup> Even Butler has difficulty in persuading his readers that the little lame lady was languishing from unrequited love. Perhaps she had been hurt, but clearly she was not anxiously looking forward to the moment of his return. Her letter shows that she made an appointment to meet him and then failed to keep it:

Did I tell you Wednesday? How stupid of me. I have so many things on my mind just now that I forget these which are most important.... The fact is Wednesday is a day of reception here, and by a very curious coincidence, I generally have an important engagement on that day. The older I grow the less I care for company, unless it is exactly the company I like.<sup>2</sup>

Miss Savage was often sharp in her letters, but never before had she been cruel. To hint, in what appears to be an innocent remark, that a meeting with Butler, who had been far distant for months, was not an important engagement was wicked indeed. Furious as he must have been, Butler's egotism prevented him from catching any of the thrusts, or

<sup>1</sup> Butler to Miss Savage, December, 1875, Letters, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit., Miss Savage to Butler, December, 1875, 110.



the letter would have been more carefully edited. The friendship survived the chilly welcome, however, and the correspondence flourished once more. Miss Savage's letters soon showed their customary warmth, wit, and sparkle. On the other hand, Butler's letters seldom sparkle. When he edited the correspondence he found his own letters so "meagre and egotistical" that he destroyed them "wholesale" until he was tired. At least, that contrite admission is Butler's explanation for some of the gaps in his side of the correspondence.

With smug complacency, Henry Festing Jones, who helped himself liberally to her letters to enliven chapter after chapter of his Memoir, remarks, "She may be said to have posted her claim to a literary reputation in Butler's letter-box."<sup>1</sup> Indeed she may. Her letters are sometimes clever, often witty, and always gay, although Catherine Carswell finds her wit somewhat acidulated. With the remark that it "takes a Jane Austen to put a perennial head on feminine small beer," Miss Carswell observes that Miss Savage's letters, were it not for their association with Butler, would scarcely survive in print.<sup>2</sup> Her point is well-taken, but Miss Savage's "small beer" is seldom

<sup>1</sup>Jones, Memoir, II, 106.

<sup>2</sup>Catherine Carswell, "Samuel Butler and Miss Savage," The Spectator, December, 6, 1935, p. 947.



flat, and it should be noted that it was Butler himself who robbed the letters of what might have proved to be their lasting qualities when again and again he deleted passages of criticism of his own manuscripts. Happily, Keynes and Hill restored some of these pages in which the acuity of her perception and the soundness of her psychology in detecting the weak points of characterization in The Way of All Flesh make it abundantly clear why Butler tried to persuade her to collaborate with him in writing a book. He appreciated her wit, and valued her usefulness, but at the same time was bored by her brilliance.<sup>1</sup> He was unaware how much she really meant to him until suddenly, without warning, she was no longer available to come at his bidding. Remorsefully he wrote, "Death bound me to her when he set me free."<sup>2</sup>

His robbing her letters of their chief literary interest was not a malicious act, I believe, but merely the result of a lack of perception that Miss Savage's comment upon his own manuscripts would be of interest to posterity. And--were it not for the three sonnets that he wrote about her in the last year of his life--his decision to pay a tribute to her memory by arranging their correspondence for publication might be accepted as a genuinely sincere attempt to make some amends for the shabby way in

<sup>1</sup> See the excerpt from Butler's Note-Books in which he comments on their friendship, quoted in Letters, 363.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Butleriana, Sonnets, 152.



which for years he had taken her literary help for granted. However, as in the case of Pauli, the tribute he paid with one hand he immediately snatched away with the other. In the sonnets that he wrote in remorse he made much of the unattractiveness of the kindest and most brilliant woman he had ever known. He did so in an attempt to explain his lack of passion for "the too impossible she." That he included the first four lines of the most shocking sonnet in a letter to Jones shows unmistakably that Butler's remorse was but a sham and simply another manifestation of his deplorable egotism, for it scarcely required the finer sensibilities of a gentleman to realize that the infamous verses should have been destroyed as soon as they were written.

In evaluating the material concerning the three great friendships one can draw certain conclusions about the character of the man who, mindful of possible posthumous fame, spent many hours in the last years of his life "editing his remains." That Butler wished to present pictures of himself as a devoted friend grievously abused and deceived by Charles Paine Pauli, as the truly great friend and benefactor of Henry Festing Jones, and as a kindly man of letters dismayed and harassed by the mute appeal in the too-frequent letters of Miss Savage is indisputable. Moreover, although Jones at least had some



doubts concerning the validity of the interpretation Butler placed upon one of Miss Savage's perfectly innocent remarks,<sup>1</sup> it is woefully apparent that, in the main, he wished to preserve the pictures as Butler left them. However, the evidence produced in this chapter shows clearly that Butler's pictures are very much over-drawn, for undoubtedly even his best friends suffered from his selfishness and malice. It is evident that when he found that Pauli's will had given no tribute to their friendship, Butler's wounded vanity led him to produce a manifestly false portrait of his friend in an essay that purports to be a frank account of their long association but actually effects as complete a piece of slander as has ever been accomplished in English letters. And Butler did additional damage to his friend's reputation by making allusions to their friendship in a scholarly work that discussed an infamous intimacy. Too, it has been proven that Jones's jealousy caused him to remove references to Pauli in significant notes, and that he failed to achieve honest biography when he mined most of his material to describe Butler's association with Pauli almost entirely from the malicious essay of 1898. In the discussion of Butler's friendship with "the too impossible she" it has been demonstrated that Butler's over-

<sup>1</sup>See, Samuel Butler, A Memoir, II, 350-351.



weening vanity led him to give an exaggerated picture of the devotion he received from Eliza Mary Ann Savage. Samuel Butler, therefore, in spite of the honesty, kindness, and generosity that were the tenets of his code of the gentleman, displayed with reprehensible frequency that he could show dishonesty, cruelty, and even meanness in the treatment of his three best friends.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

"Embryo minds, like embryo bodies, pass through a number of strange metamorphoses before they adopt their final shape."<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Butler was a rebel. His rebellion shows in his attitude towards the family, his education, the Christian faith, and the Church; in his scorn for the then-current values in music, art, and literature; and in his revolt against Darwinism. His rebellion was none the less fierce for his having been held captive for a time by each of these influences that shaped him. He took a deep pride in his emancipation and we find the hero in Erewhon wondering whether he could make clear to the people "that the constitution of a person's body was a thing over which he or she had had at any rate no initial control whatever, while the mind was a perfectly different thing, and capable of being created anew and directed according to the pleasure of its possessor."<sup>2</sup> These words reflect the deep satisfaction Butler felt in having escaped from the influences that had shackled his youthful spirit, but at the time of writing Erewhon his mind was still undergoing metamorphoses, for he had not then grasped the full significance

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 231.

<sup>2</sup>Butler, Erewhon, 133.



of the ideas with which he was playing in the Machine Chapters and was still far from his revolt against Darwinism. Because his intellectual emancipation enabled him to cast a cold and satiric eye upon the family, education, Christianity, and the Church, he believed that what he had to say would be of special value to his countrymen. In the character of Ernest in The Way of All Flesh he explains his position:

There are a lot of things that want saying which no one dares to say, a lot of shams which want attacking, and yet no one attacks them. It seems to me that I can say things which not another man in England except myself will venture to say, and yet which are crying to be said.<sup>1</sup>

Butler's rebellion was born of conflict, and the most deep seated conflict within Butler was rooted in his animosity towards his father. Nowhere is this conflict more clearly evident than in The Way of All Flesh. In his childhood Butler's sensitive spirit craved the love, approval, and guidance of his father, but the Canon, although ambitious for his son, was jealous and therefore quite incapable of showing the sympathy and affection that he himself had received in boyhood in abundant measure from his own generous and warm-hearted family. In Samuel Butler's early childhood there were the beatings and cold censure that generated a life-long fear of his father, and

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 377.



the little treacheries and betrayals spawned from his mother's over-active conscience that caused him ever-afterwards to look upon all women with suspicion and distrust. The horror of his youthful training placed a chill upon his spirit and explains the mercilessness with which he could depict his parents in the characters of Christina and Theobald in The Way of All Flesh. "Their children," he tells us, "were white and puny; they were suffering from home-sickness. They were starving, through being over-crammed with the wrong things."<sup>1</sup> Again his deep resentment leads him in the character of Overton to attack his parents when, with reference to the celebrated letter Fanny Butler wrote her sons, he asks:

How...was it possible that a child only a little past five years old, trained in such an atmosphere of prayers and hymns and sums and happy Sunday evenings--to say nothing of daily repeated beatings over the said prayers and hymns, etc., about which our authoress is silent--how was it possible that a lad so trained should grow up in any healthy or vigorous development, even though in her own way his mother was undoubtedly very fond of him, and sometimes told him stories?<sup>2</sup>

Although as a result of his own experience he had little faith in the family as an institution, the nature of his evolutionary theories led him, nonetheless, to have a great respect for good breeding:

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 105.



The only thing that can produce a deep and permanently good influence upon a man's character is to have been begotten of good ancestors for many generations--or at any rate to have reverted to a good ancestor--and to live among nice people.<sup>1</sup>

His novel, of course, shows very decidedly that he thought of himself as an example of one who had a good character because he had reverted to an earlier forbear, for, apart from Alethea and the compound representation of the hero in the characters of Overton and Ernest, The Way of All Flesh is peopled by characters who by no stretch of the imagination could be called "nice." Mrs. Garnett, it is true, with the best intentions attempted to restore kindness, humor, and warm affection to Butler's nearer relations, but it is generally agreed that the evidence she produced did little to modify the harshness of Butler's picture of the rectory and its inmates.<sup>2</sup>

When young Samuel went off to school at Shrewsbury there was a chance that through scholastic achievement he might have won the admiration and approval of his father, but the Canon's short-sightedness in using the Eton texts to give his son a thorough grounding in Greek and Latin undermined all the boy's self-confidence and increased his

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Alps and Sanctuaries, 252.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Stillman observes: "...when one reads Mrs. Garnett's fascinating apologia for those two 'particularly pleasant people,' his sisters, one cannot escape the conviction that if Butler erred it was on the side of excessive charity." Samuel Butler, 201.



distaste for classical learning. Because he could not excel, Butler became indifferent to his studies and thereby increased the disapproval of his father. And, apparently, not only in the matter of choosing Latin and Greek grammars had the Canon failed his son, for--as I have already suggested--there is a reasonable amount of evidence in Butler's personal notes to support a belief that his boyhood was troubled by a feeling of moral guilt that had far-reaching consequences. Abundant corroboration for this belief is found in The Way of All Flesh. The hero, Ernest, certainly had been warped by some unfortunate influence during his school years. We find Butler saying:

...this same wicked inner self gave him bad advice about his pocket money, the choice of his companions, and on the whole Ernest was attentive and obedient to its behests, more so than Theobald had been. The consequence was that he learned little, his mind growing more slowly and his body rather faster than heretofore: and when by and by his inner self urged him in directions where he met obstacles beyond his strength to combat, he took--though with passionate compunctions of conscience--the nearest course to the one from which he was debarred which circumstances would allow.<sup>1</sup>

In Ernest's confession to Ellen, when he told her what he thought he could tell no other, there is a yet more pointed reference to youthful miseries: "I had learnt as a boy things that I ought not to have learnt, and had never had a chance of that which would have set me straight."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 128.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 305.



That Butler thought his father should have given him some guidance to avoid the pitfalls that marred his youthful spirit is evident in another chapter of The Way of All Flesh in which he asks:

Is it wonderful that the boy, though always trying to keep up appearances as though he were cheerful and contented--and at times actually being so--wore often an anxious, jaded look when he thought none were looking, which told of an almost incessant conflict within?<sup>1</sup>

Theobald, we are told, "doubtless saw these looks and knew how to interpret them, but it was his profession to know how to shut his eyes to things that were inconvenient..."<sup>2</sup> Bitterly, Butler goes on to expound "the whole duty of a father" when he observes:

It was not much that was wanted. To make no mysteries where Nature has made none, to bring his conscience under something like reasonable control, to give Ernest his head a little more, to ask fewer questions, and to give him pocket money with a desire that it should be spent upon menus plaisirs.<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly, Butler's unmanageable conscience that in later life produced the exaggerated qualms with which he regarded his treatment of W. S. Moorhouse and Miss Savage came of his having been guilt-ridden in early youth.

The feelings of fear and deep unhappiness that marked Butler's boyhood certainly explain the savagery of his

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 187.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.



denunciation of the family as an institution:

...the family is a survival of the principle which is more logically embodied in the compound animal-- and the compound animal is a form of life which has been found incompatible with high development. I would do with the family among mankind what nature has done with the compound animal, and confine it to the lower and less progressive races.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, to his family background can be attributed Butler's apprehensions concerning marriage and even his attitude to love between man and woman. In The Way of All Flesh Ernest's thoughts, although a trifle confused in expression, reveal truly Butlerian sentiment:

He did not know any woman, in fact, whom he would not rather die than marry.... As for any man loving, or even being at all fond of any woman, he supposed it was so, but he believed the greater number of those who professed such sentiments were liars.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in spite of his fear that some scheming woman might capture either himself or one of his friends, Butler enjoyed holding mildly naughty correspondences with more than one woman, and took pains to write to Jones's sister as well as to Harriet and May although he disliked all three.

The bitter resentment that Butler felt towards his father was intensified by a deep distrust that developed from the Canon's failure to give him moral guidance when a schoolboy, spiritual counsel when a young man, and longed-for financial independence when an adult. It would

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 100.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 226.



be difficult to say which of the Canon's three failures had the most damaging influence upon the character of Samuel Butler. The lack of moral guidance, it appears, led to 'the ambush of young days' with its consequent disastrous, long-reaching effects; the inadequacy of the Canon's spiritual counsel when Butler most needed it resulted in his last-minute withdrawal from ordination and his subsequent attack upon Christianity and the Anglican Church; and unwillingness to live up to the promises he had made of financial assistance developed in Butler the exaggerated feeling about money that later marred his greatest friendships.

That, but for a chance discovery, he would have been ordained without having heard the negative side of the Christian evidences filled Butler with intense bitterness, and caused him to regard his father and all those who suffered from "habitual untruthfulness of mind" with a sense of revulsion that bordered on horror: "There, but for the grace of God, went Ernest Pontifex," was the thought that struck the hero of The Way of All Flesh whenever he saw a bishop going to consecration.<sup>1</sup> Ernest, Butler tells us, "knew he had been humbugged, and he knew also that the greater part of the ills which had afflicted him were due,

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 275.



indirectly, in chief measure to the influence of Christian teaching..."<sup>1</sup> And Ernest, just as Butler did himself, wrote a book that attacked Christian orthodoxy in the guise of a defence of "that institution which was dearer to the writer than any other--the Church of England."<sup>2</sup>

Butler's hero escaped from the forces that had dominated him by serving a term in prison; Butler escaped by emigrating to New Zealand, and in that country found himself. Through the reading of Gibbon, the careful examination of the Greek Testament, and the discovery of Darwin's Origin of Species he developed his rationalistic powers; from his hard work on his sheep-run he gained both health and financial independence; and in Charles Paine Pauli he found a life-long friend. These were seemingly rich rewards to have gained during a short period of exile, and for a time they did much to resolve the conflicts that had so distressed him. But in the next ten years Butler not only lost his money and good health but also lost his unreserved faith in rationalistic powers, his faith in Darwin, and--if the essay "Charles Paine Pauli is to be believed--his faith in his beloved friend. Augmented and intensified, the original conflicts now repossessed him.

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 277.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 384.



Butler's reaction to the treatment he had received from his father led him to adopt what he called "the Ishmaelitish line"<sup>1</sup> and, finding that a career in art afforded him little opportunity of either making a living or annoying his father, he proceeded in Erewhon and in The Fair Haven to satirize the forces that had shaped him. The first book gave amusement to his readers, but the second--which sought to mislead the devout into following arguments that ordinarily they would never have given a moment's consideration--succeeded only in giving deep offence to the orthodox. Having been tricked once, the reviewers subsequently eyed him with suspicion and the result was that Life and Habit, the book that cost him much earnest study and reflection and in which he tentatively attacked Darwin and the scientists, met with a cold reception. The silence that greeted Life and Habit shocked Butler into believing that the scientists were conspiring against him. His failure to win Darwin's sponsorship for his attacks on orthodoxy earlier and the failure of Darwin to make any direct reply to his books on evolution hurt Butler deeply. After referring to Butler's attitude towards the scientists Cole observes: "He was no less angry with the classical scholars for ignoring his theories about Homer; and in both

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Further Extracts, 196.



these connections he threw about quite absurd charges of dishonest dealing."<sup>1</sup> But Cole is too severe, for I have shown that with regard to the scientists Butler's charges were neither absurd nor unfounded, and even Francis Darwin in later life came to believe that Butler had had "some cause of complaint."<sup>2</sup>

Certainly the attack on Darwin had an ill-effect on Butler's reputation and an even worse effect upon his character. How much he was hurt by the opprobrium heaped upon him by the reviewers is shown by the fact that he appended to the second printing of Evolution, Old and New the scathing remarks of the critics. What hurt Butler most, perhaps, was that the very men who made witty remarks at his expense had sometimes helped themselves to his work or ideas without acknowledgement. Undoubtedly, the Darwin quarrel intensified Butler's feeling of being an outcast, and he became unduly sensitive whenever he was in the presence of famous or successful men. The taciturnity that he displayed on these occasions sometimes bordered on rudeness. Even Shaw, who during Butler's latter years did everything possible to aid him in gaining recognition,

<sup>1</sup>Cole, Samuel Butler, 17.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Darwin to his sister, Henrietta Litchfield, 1904, quoted in the Appendix, The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, ed. Nora Barlow, 216.



was eyed with suspicion. There is a note in the 1951 edition of the Note-Books that, although no names are mentioned, almost certainly refers to Shaw and expresses with delightful humor the unease felt by Butler at any social gathering at which he was outranked:

I know a man, and one whom people generally call a very clever one, who, when his eye catches mine if I meet him at an at home or an evening party, beams upon me from afar with the expression of an intellectual rattlesnake on having espied an intellectual rabbit. Through any crowd that man will come sidling towards me, ruthless and irresistible as fate; while I foreknowing my doom sidle also him-wards, and flatter myself that no sign of my inward apprehension has escaped me.<sup>1</sup>

The very phrase with which Butler dubs himself describes the conflict between egotism and humility that lurked within him. But with a pen in his hand Butler seldom felt the least rabbit-like and made acid comments upon the music, art, and literature that were held in special esteem by his Victorian contemporaries.

Butler's unhappiness and bewilderment over his lack of success was of course increased by his consequent lack of money. In turn, the long years of financial insecurity intensified his feeling of resentment against his father who in three separate financial agreements treated him unfairly and perhaps even unscrupulously. The importance of Butler's difficulties with money cannot be over-emphasized

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Samuel Butler's Note-Books, 103.



for one of the most marked--if most unpleasant--traits in his character was a reverence for the power of money. It was this reverence which gave rise to Butler's macabre interest in the state of his father's health, and to the importance which he attached to money throughout his books. In Erewhon he used the analogy of the Musical Banks to veil his attack on the Church, and in The Way of All Flesh money is a dominant theme. Overton dispenses truly Butlerian philosophy when he discourses upon money:

...Loss of money indeed is not only the worst pain in itself, but it is the parent of all others.... the three most serious losses which a man can suffer are those affecting money, health and reputation. Loss of money is far the worst, then comes ill-health, and then loss of reputation; loss of reputation is a bad third, for, if a man keeps health and money unimpaired, it will be generally found that his loss of reputation is due to breaches of parvenu conventions only, and not to violations of those older, better established canons whose authority is unquestionable. In this case a man may grow a new reputation as easily as a lobster grows a new claw, or, if he have health and money, may thrive in great peace without any reputation at all.<sup>1</sup>

To Butler money simply meant power and security, for, apart from the hiring of Alfred Cathie and more frequent holidays abroad, there was little change in his mode of life when at last he became wealthy. But money for too many years had symbolized his bondage to his father, and perhaps it is not surprising that when the fortune came

<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Way of All Flesh, 281-282.



into his own hands he intended that it should maintain the bondage of Pauli and Jones to himself. When he found that Pauli had actually been quite independent, malice caused Butler to write the essay that robbed Pauli of the honorable character his friends maintained he possessed. Again, Jones's escape from bondage apparently created a rift in their remarkable friendship and caused Butler to treat Jones in a shameful manner by insisting on the repayment of the annual sums Jones had received during the long years he had filled the role of Butler's companion and helper. One can forgive Butler for his preoccupation with the importance of money during the difficult decade that preceded his father's death, but that he should have allowed bitter feelings about money to mar his greatest friendships after he had become wealthy is deplorable.

It is difficult to come to any exact conclusion about the character of Samuel Butler because there are not a few significant textual differences in the papers and letters that have been published. Moreover, whether these differences arose from chance or design one cannot decide without the opportunity of making a close examination of all the original documents. However, one thing is certain: the spirit of malice spawned of the deep conflicts created by the Reverend Thomas Butler in the rectory at Langar was



the bad fairy in the character of his son. It was that evil spirit that caused Samuel Butler not infrequently to cast aside the faith by which he lived -- the code of the gentleman.



APPENDIX A

(From Samuel Butler's Note-Books, ed. Geoffrey Keynes and Brian Hill, 33.)

THE FIRST THING THAT SHOOK MY CONFIDENCE in my mother, or one of the first, was at Bonn in the summer of 1843 (or 1842, I must find out).<sup>1</sup> My mother, Miss Ward, the governess, and the rest of us except my father had been at the table d'hôte and a dispute began afterwards between my mother and Miss Ward as to whether a man at the table was a gentleman or not. Womenlike they were talking the men over. My mother said the man was a gentleman--Miss Ward said he was not. Pressed for reasons, she said, 'because he had dirty nails.'

I thought this so convincing that it seemed to me that my mother had got the worst of it, and had been worsted too by her own governess. It began therefore to dawn upon me that she might be mistaken, and did not know so much as I had supposed.

<sup>1</sup>The correct date was 1843.



#### APPENDIX B

The following story seems obviously to refer to Butler and his brother, and as it is no more outrageous than many notes referring to "my mother," "my father," or "my sister," one wonders what hold Tom may have had over Butler that he should have avoided a direct reference.

#### 'OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN'

There were two brothers who had quarrelled, and who had an old father who had quarrelled with both. One of them was heard by me to say that the only thing he now had in common with his brother was a wish to be able to repeat the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer with literal accuracy.

Butler, Further Extracts from the Note-Books of Samuel Butler, 25.



APPENDIX C

In Evolution, Old and New Butler very briefly recapitulates some of the points he made in Life and Habit in challenging Darwin's implication that the case of neuter insects invalidated Lamarck's doctrine of inherited habit:

Mr. Darwin writes: "In the simpler case of neuter insects all of one caste, which, as I believe, have been rendered different from the fertile males and females through natural selection...." He thus attributes the sterility and peculiar characteristics, we will say, of the common hive working bees--"neuter insects all of one caste"--to natural selection. Now, nothing is more certain than that these characteristics--sterility, a cavity in the thigh for collecting wax, a proboscis for gathering honey, &c.--are due to the treatment which the eggs laid by the queen bee receive after they have left her body. Take an egg and treat it in a certain way, and it becomes a working bee; treat the same egg in a certain other way, and it becomes a queen. If the bees are in danger of becoming queenless they take eggs which were in the way of being developed into working bees, and change their food and cells, whereon they develop into queens instead. How Mr. Darwin could attribute the neutralization of the working bees--an act which is obviously one of abortion committed by the body politic of the hive on a balance of considerations--to the action of what he calls "natural selection," and how, again, he could suppose that what he was advancing had any but a confirmatory bearing upon Lamarck's position, is incomprehensible, unless the passage in question be taken as a mere slip. That attention has been called to it is plain, for the words "the well-known doctrine of Lamarck" have been changed in later editions into "the well-known doctrine of inherited habit as advanced by Lamarck," but this correction, though some apparent improvement on the original text, does little indeed in comparison with what is wanted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Butler, Evolution, Old and New, 249-250.



APPENDIX D

An Academic Exercise

We were two lovers standing sadly by,  
While our two loves lay dead upon the ground;  
Each love had striven not to be first to die,  
But each was gashed with many a cruel wound.  
Said I: "Your love was false while mine was true."  
Aflood with tears he cried: "It was not so,  
'Twas your false love my true love falsely slew--  
For 'twas your love that was the first to go."  
Thus did we stand and said no more for shame  
Till I, seeing his cheek so wan and wet,  
Sobbed thus: "So be it; my love shall bear the blame;  
Let us inter them honourably." And yet  
I swear by all truth human and divine  
'Twas his that in its death throes murdered mine.

Samuel Butler

January 12, 1902



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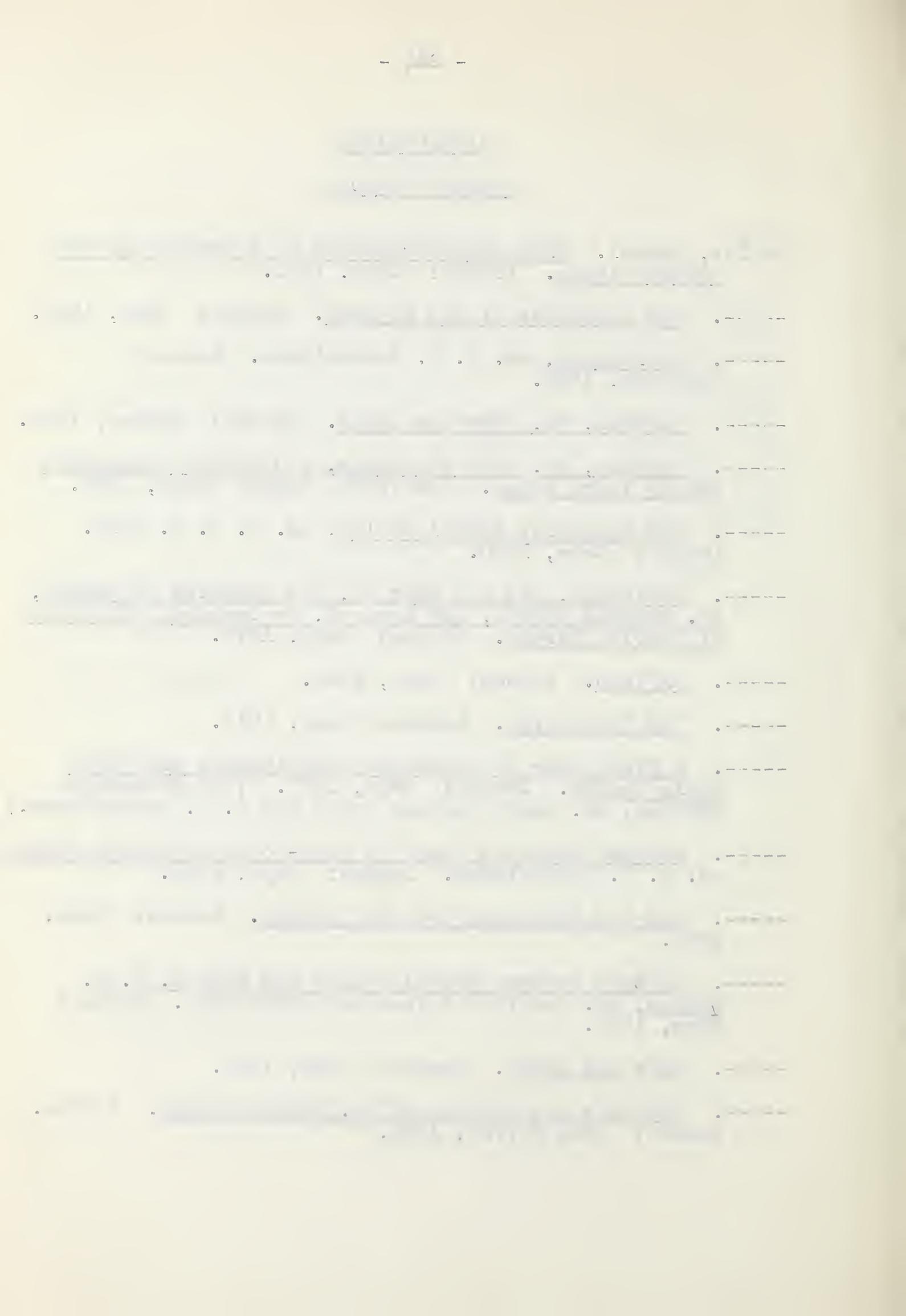
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